WHITENESS ON CREDIT: MIGRATION, RACE, AND SOCIAL CAPITAL IN FRANCE AND THE CARIBBEAN, 1763-1791

by
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ABSTRACT

Historians of Old Regime Saint-Domingue and the Haitian Revolution often use the term *petits blancs* as a catch-all for colonial whites excluded from the plantation-owning elite. The so-called *petits blancs* are characterized as a horde of immigrants and vagabonds, trapped in Dominguan port cities after they failed to make a quick colonial fortune. Consigned to the social and economic margins of colonial society, they reacted with racist resentment toward Saint-Domingue's free people of color.

I argue that this conception of *petits blancs* distorts the social and economic complexities of pre-revolutionary Saint-Domingue. I use a variety of archival sources including passenger manifests, notarial records, newspapers, letters, and legal codes, to propose a new narrative about Saint-Domingue's laboring and middling white population. After the Seven Years' War, a steady stream of French migrants arrived in Saint-Domingue seeking colonial fortunes. Some migrants instead found a foothold in the port city of Cap Français as urban artisans and small retailers. They deployed overlapping strategies for social and economic advancement: investing in the brutal economy of slavery, exercising mastery over free and enslaved laborers, forging credit networks, and asserting their status as "white."

How, then, did the imprecise, reductive category *petits blancs* gain traction in the secondary literature? One early definition of *petits blancs* took shape during the French Revolution, as debates over the limits of national citizenship inspired new projects of social categorization. When Saint-Domingue's free people of color claimed citizenship

rights, they used the socio-racial category *petits blancs* to highlight, by contrast, the free colored virtues of stability, loyalty, and property ownership. Historians have uncritically adopted and reproduced this rhetorical definition.

I set aside the term *petits blancs* to understand white retailers and artisans as an intermediate socio-racial group, fully entangled in the racist, exploitative slave society of Old Regime Saint-Domingue. The laboring and middling whites of Cap Français no longer disappear into stereotypes of the disorderly, resentful mob, but become visible and culpable as willing participants in sometimes-violent defense of the social and economic position they had gained.

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INTRODUCTION

Louis Blanc was born in Marseilles, France in about 1757.[1] As a young man, he migrated to the Caribbean colony of Saint-Domingue, perhaps drawn by rumors of the vast fortunes to be made in the colony's booming plantation economy. Louis spent the next several decades in Saint-Domingue, but never ascended to membership in the wealthy planter elite. Instead, he became a shopkeeper in the port city of Cap Français, where he lived with his wife, Magdeleine, and their children until 1793.

The Blanc family's settled, middling existence stands in sharp contrast to the usual scholarly depiction of French migrants to Saint-Domingue. Between the end of the Seven Years' War in 1763 and the beginning of the French Revolution, approximately 1,000 individuals migrated from France to Saint-Domingue each year, for a total of around 30,000.[2] These migrants make only a minor appearance in most histories of the colony. When they are mentioned, they are broadly written off as failures who joined the ranks of the so-called *petits blancs*, or "little whites." Historians have used the term *petits blancs* as a catch-all to encompass "those [whites] who did not own land," or to gesture to "a broad social group that embraced both the industrious *apprenti-colon* and the dregs of waterfront life," or even to dismiss "a crowd of city vagabonds, fugitives

[1] National Archives Record Group 21 (Records of District Courts of the United States, 1685-1991): Landing Reports of Aliens, 1798-1828. US District Court for Eastern Pennsylvania, Vol. 1, Report No. 68, Louis Blanc, December 15, 1798.
[2] John D. Garrigus, *Before Haiti: Race and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 118.

from justice, escaped galley slaves, debtors unable to pay their bills, adventurers seeking adventure or quick fortunes."[3]

Such vague characterizations of the *petits blancs* reveal just how little we know about Saint-Domingue's white population beyond the planter, merchant, and administrative elite. Historians of Old Regime Saint-Domingue and the Haitian Revolution have provided a wealth of detail about other socio-racial groups such as the free people of color and (where possible) the enslaved Africans and Afro-descendants who made up the vast majority of the colonial population.[4] *Petits blancs*, however, persists in the historical literature as an amorphous, empty category.[5]

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[3] Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (London, U.K., and Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 35; David Geggus, *Slavery, War, and Revolution: The British Occupation of Saint-Domingue, 1793-1798* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 9; C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 33. See also, for example: Ashli White, *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 4; Trevor Burnard and John Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine: Atlantic Capitalism in French Saint-Domingue and British Jamaica* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Jeremy D. Popkin, *You Are All Free: The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery* (Cambridge, U.K. and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 62.

[4] For example: Carolyn Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint-Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990); John D. Garrigus, *Before Haiti: Race and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006); Dominique Rogers, "Les libres de couleur dans les capitales de Saint-Domingue: fortune, mentalités et intégration à la fin de l'Ancien Régime (1776-1789)" (PhD diss., Université Michel Montaigne, Bordeaux III, 1999); Susan M. Socolow, "Economic Roles of the Free Women of Color of Cap Français," in *More Than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas*, ed. David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996); Stewart King, *Blue Coat or Powdered Wig: Free People of Color in Pre-Revolutionary Saint Domingue* (Athens, G.A. and London, U.K.: The University of Georgia Press, 2001); Doris Garraway, *The Libertine Colony: Creolization in the Early French Caribbean* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); Paul Cheney, *Cul de Sac: Patrimony, Capitalism, and Slavery in French Saint-Domingue* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2017); Jennifer L. Palmer, *Intimate Bonds: Family and Slavery in the French Atlantic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, Inc., 2016); Dominique Rogers and Stewart King, "Housekeepers, Merchants, Rentières: Free Women of Color in the Port Cities of Colonial Saint-Domingue, 1750-1790," 357-397, in *Women in Port: Gendering Communities, Economies, and Social Networks in Atlantic Port Cities, 1500-1800*, eds. Douglas Catterall and Jodi Campbell (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

[5] There are a few exceptions to this rule, works that look more closely at nonelite whites: Charles Frostin, *Les révoltes blanches à Saint-Domingue aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles (Haïti avant 1789)* (Paris: Editions L'école, 1975); Charles Frostin, "Angevins de modeste condition établis à Saint-Domingue (Correspondance Labry, 1752-1778)" in *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer* 57.209 (4e trimestre

This historiographical gap feels surprising for several reasons. First, by the late 1780s the so-called *petits blancs* comprised roughly one-third of the colonial white population of 30,000.[6] This number pales, of course, beside the colony's enslaved population, which approached 500,000 during those same years. On the other hand, one-third is still a noticeable proportion. In colonial port cities, where the white and immigrant populations tended to concentrate, the "*petit-blanc*" presence would have been even more evident. It is time we learned something about this group rather than leaving one-third of the white colonial population as a fuzzy outline.

Going beyond accepted understandings of the *petits blancs* to explore the real experiences of nonelite whites accomplishes more than the token filling-in of a historiographical blank. This study does more than simply uncover details about laboring and middling whites themselves. It also explores their interactions with individuals in other socio-racial categories. As such, it represents a new line of intervention in an ongoing scholarly debate about the extent and impact of racialization in Old Regime Saint-Domingue.

Some historical detail about the colony of Saint-Domingue will help illuminate the terms and stakes of this debate. By the mid- to late eighteenth century, Saint-Domingue had become a society of extremes. The tiny colony (roughly the size of New Jersey) played an outsized role in the Atlantic trade of export commodities, producing nearly as much sugar as the entire British West Indies and 60 percent of Europe's supply of

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1970): 447-468; Jean Hébrard, "Les deux vies de Michel Vincent, colon à Saint-Domingue (c. 1730-1804)," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* Vol. 57, no. 2 (April-July 2010): 50-78.

[6] Garrigus, *Before Haiti*, 118; Rogers, "Les libres de couleur," 62.

coffee.[7] The large-scale transatlantic business of buying, selling, and transporting these commodities made Saint-Domingue into one of the main centers of Atlantic capitalism, what Trevor Burnard and John Garrigus describe as a "plantation machine" powered by capital from Europe and enslaved labor from Africa.[8]

To meet the demands of the Atlantic commodities market, a massive enslaved population labored under the colony's viciously destructive plantation regime. Their work and suffering supported the lavish lifestyles of a wealthy free minority. Among the landowning elite were European-born whites, white Creoles (born in the colony), and free people of color. This latter category included both emancipated slaves and their freeborn descendants, both black and mixed-race. Colonial society was theoretically divided into a "tripartite" racial hierarchy of whites, free people of color, and slaves. In practice, however, racial categorizations were inflected by a cross-cutting hierarchy of wealth such that affluent free colored property owners often took social precedence over less-wealthy whites. Scholars agree that this socio-racial status quo began to shift in the decades after the Seven Years' War but dispute the nature of these changes.

Historians disagree about if and when the racial boundaries of Dominguan society shifted from a loose "tripartite" order founded on a social construction of race to a more strictly enforced, biologically defined color line.[9] The works of historians John

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[7] Cheney, *Cul de Sac*, 1.
[8] Burnard and Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine*, 2.
[9] This debate has implications beyond the history of Saint-Domingue. It speaks to broader questions about empire, racism, and modernity, as part of a growing body of literature that traces the operation of racist discourses and policies across the early modern French empire. For this broader imperial debate, see: Saliha Belmessous, "Assimilation and Racialism in Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century French Colonial Policy," *The American Historical Review* (April 2005): 322-349; Matthew Gerber, "Bastardy, Race, and Law in the Eighteenth-Century French Atlantic: The Evidence of Litigation," *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (Fall 2013): 571-600; Guillaume Aubert, "'The Blood of France': Race and Purity of

Garrigus and Dominique Rogers encapsulate the opposing sides of this debate--although both of them approach the question from the perspective of the free people of color.

John Garrigus argues that a fundamental shift in the colonial socio-racial hierarchy took place after the Seven Years' War.[10] In the first half of the eighteenth century, he writes, solidarity among enslavers took precedence over distinctions of color, such that wealthy, freeborn people of color were accepted into white society on equal terms. After the Seven Years' War, metropolitan administrators and colonial elites in search of a new framework to encourage colonial loyalty to France emphasized the unity of the colonial "white" population, regardless of wealth or social status. Garrigus sees the so-called *petits blancs* as a driving force behind this new emphasis on white unity.[11] He explains that, beginning in the 1760s, the growing number of immigrants from France and the closing of the colonial "frontier" of unclaimed land led to an increase in the population of *petits blancs*. These would-be plantation owners instead stagnated in the colonial ports, at the economic and social margins, where they cultivated a powerful resentment of the more successful free people of color. Metropolitan administrators and members of the white colonial elite played upon this racist resentment to draw the white colonial population together. This elevation of

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Blood in the French Atlantic World," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 61, No. 3 (July 2004): 439-478; the collected essays in Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall, eds. *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

[10] Garrigus, *Before Haiti*, 4-8; also, "Redrawing the Colour Line: Gender and the Social Construction of Race in Pre-Revolutionary Haiti," *The Journal of Caribbean History*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (January 1996): 28-50.

[11] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "Motion in the System: Coffee, Color, and Slavery in Eighteenth-Century Saint-Domingue," *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Winter 1982): 331-388, 360, concurs with this view.

"whiteness" represented the abandonment of a social definition of racial categories for one that was more explicitly biological.[12]

Dominique Rogers, in contrast, sees the decades between the Seven Years' War and the French Revolution as a period when the free people of color enjoyed increasing economic success and social integration.[13] Even as the colonial legal regime of the 1770s mandated sharper social distinctions between whites and free people of color, Rogers argues that these legal distinctions were rarely respected in practice, as Dominguan society continued to value wealth over color. Rogers views the "*petits blancs*" (however loosely defined) and the free people of color as essentially equal socio-racial groups whose interactions were characterized by cooperation as much as competition. The occasional eruption of racist hostility from resentful French migrants was the exception, not the rule.[14] To the extent that metropolitan projects to re-order colonial society had any impact, she argues, they excluded the *petits blancs* as much as the free people of color.[15] Ultimately, Rogers places her emphasis on daily practice rather than overarching laws and concludes that a society cannot be truly "racialized" until racial distinctions are widely internalized as habitus.[16] She calls for further research on the racial ideologies and practices of colonial socio-racial groups beyond the white

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[12] For the rise of biological racism, see also William Max Nelson, "Making Men: Enlightenment Ideas of Racial Engineering," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 115, No. 5 (December 2010): 1364-1394.
[13] Rogers makes this argument in her dissertation, "Les libres de couleur," and expands upon it in a subsequent article, "Raciser la société: un projet administratif pour une société domingoise complexe (1760-1791)," *Journal de la société des américanistes*, tome 95, nº 2 (2009): 235-260.
[14] Rogers, "Les libres de couleur," 582.
[15] Rogers, "Raciser la société," 6.
[16] Rogers, "Raciser la société," 13. Palmer, *Intimate Bonds*, also emphasizes that racial categories and identities were shaped and negotiated in daily life, not dictated by overarching legal structures.

elite--among them the "*petits blancs*"--to provide a fuller picture of how racial categories were navigated and contested in daily life.[17]

This dissertation contributes to the ongoing racialization debate on several levels. First, my research into the laboring and middling white residents of Cap Français supports Rogers's depiction of them as economically and socially "neck and neck" with the free people of color. Interactions across racial "lines" were not always marked by hostility, competition, or resentment from below. On the other hand, these possibilities of cooperation and integration did not mean that racial categories lost their power. White retailers and artisans in Cap Français actively sought recognition of their whiteness, whether in notarial contracts or in street fights. The legal and cultural frameworks for whiteness that John Garrigus emphasizes were not uniformly applied or accepted, but they were powerful enough to provide the structures and incentives that made assertions of whiteness so effective.

Above all, this dissertation is concerned with the question of *how* laboring and middling whites asserted their whiteness. The secondary literature on the *petits blancs* emphasizes that the fundamental distinction in colonial white society was property ownership. Only plantation owners counted unquestionably as *grands blancs*, or *Blancs blancs*--in other words, as "true" whites. Aspiring whites without estates supposedly had to rely on other strategies to assert their social status. I argue here that the French migrants who ended up as retailers and artisans in Cap Français succeeded socially and economically by employing an interdependent repertoire of strategies. As they

[17] Rogers, "Raciser la société," 13.

invested in slavery, asserted their mastery over enslaved and free laborers, and conducted commercial and property exchanges through trust networks, they accumulated social and economic capital that they could use to claim whiteness "on credit." Reflexively, being recognized as white made their other strategies for success more effective.

As I build this argument, I face the methodological challenge of how to capture the lived experiences of a population in constant flux. Migration from France to Saint-Domingue was characterized, demographically, by a high turnover rate. As thousands of new migrants arrived in the colony each year, many earlier arrivals left to try their chances elsewhere, or succumbed to the tropical diseases that devastated the European population. Further, many migrants traveled as individuals rather than in family groups and intended a temporary stay in the colony rather than permanent settlement. Complicating matters further, the city of Cap Français was itself a sort of "contact zone" where neither metropolitan nor colonial social and legal norms consistently prevailed.

Methods and insights from the fields of microhistory and social theory have helped me make analytical sense of this moving target. Microhistorian Giovanni Levi offers a helpful articulation of how individual actors operate within institutional frameworks. He charts a path between the two extremes of cultural determinism and untrammeled personal agency, proposing instead a model in which “an individual's negotiation, manipulation, choices and decisions in the face of a normative reality which, though pervasive, nevertheless offers many opportunities for personal

opportunities and freedoms."[18] This model brings Cap Français into productive focus as a confluence point between colony and metropole where social norms and hierarchies always retained a degree of fluidity and migrants had space for improvisation and negotiation as they sought wealth and status. Further, William Sewell's theoretical understanding of "structure" underpins my thinking about how sets of ideas move and change, as well as individual people. In particular, Sewell's insight that schemas "can be generalized--that is, transposed or extended--to new situations when the opportunity arises" informs my argument that migrants strategically adapted metropolitan conventions for asserting and assessing reputations to the contingencies of colonial society.[19] In the following chapters, we will have an opportunity to see, in some depth, how these processes of improvisation and adaptation played out.

This dissertation is divided into three parts, following its own migratory path from France to Saint-Domingue and back again. In Chapter One, I argue that migration from France to Saint-Domingue after the Seven Years' War was not simply a disorganized flood of disorderly individuals seeking quick fortunes and new identities in the colonies. Even as migrants attempted to leave behind their former status and move up the social hierarchy, they carried with them material and cultural resources, specifically practices and markers of identification that they could use to establish their social position and

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[18] Giovanni Levi, from "On Microhistory," in Peter Burke, ed., *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*; in Tosh, ed., *Historians on History*, 154. Gabrielle Spiegel, "Comment on *A Crooked Line*," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 113, No. 2 (April 2008), 412, notes the rise of this approach to actors as "constrained but *not* wholly controlled by the cultural scaffolding or conceptual schemes" around them, referring to it as "neo-phenomenology."

[19] William H. Sewell, Jr., "A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation," in *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 131.

reputation upon arrival in Saint-Domingue. I approach this argument in two ways. In the first part of the chapter, I explore practices of internal migration in eighteenth-century France to highlight the social and cultural conventions through which mobile individuals could still retain stable identities and reputations. In the second part, I sample the records of passengers from Bordeaux to Saint-Domingue from 1763-1788 to gain a sense of their social and cultural background, particularly the structures and practices of identity formation that they brought with them to the colony.

In Chapters Two through Four, I shift focus to Saint-Domingue to consider how migrants adapted metropolitan reputational strategies and strategically combined them with colonial identities. When migrants arrived in Cap Français, they quickly learned how to claim whiteness as another strategy in their reputation-building repertoire. In Chapter Two, I explore how Cap Français, as an environment, influenced migrants' identity claims. On the one hand, the rapid movement of goods and people through the city's port encouraged migrants to hurriedly leverage mutual acquaintances and shared origins to form social and economic connections. On the other hand, the city was structured physically, legally, and socially to defend the colonial white population. In the process of learning the city, migrants learned this built-in and punitively enforced racial order. At the same time, they learned that whiteness needed to be defended, as they encountered cases where the logic of racial order broke down or was unevenly applied.

To succeed in middling trade and commerce in Cap Français, migrants needed to establish themselves as creditworthy potential business connections. To do so, they used a repertoire of social practices and legal instruments familiar from credit networks

in the metropole. Chapter Three explores these credit practices, which included affective ties, notarized contracts, and strategic use of overlapping legal jurisdictions. Migrants sometimes worked across racial lines as they built economic and social networks to guard against the constant risk inherent in colonial commerce. These same credit practices reaffirmed their status as white through inscriptions in public-facing documents such as notarial records. Finally, metropolitan and colonial conventions intertwined as migrants secured credit by using enslaved people of African descent as human repositories of wealth.

As middling and laboring migrants constructed reputations for themselves, they also manipulated the language of "mastery," playing on its twin senses of metropolitan guild membership and colonial power as an enslaver. Chapter Four considers Cap Français as a legal space where two labor regimes overlapped: free white labor exempt from metropolitan guild restrictions and forced black labor bound by the slave law of the Code Noir. This confluence gave migrants an unusual degree of freedom to claim multiple forms of mastery, and the social status that mastery implied. These three middle chapters work together to show how credit, mastery, and whiteness intertwined as white retailers and artisans improvised strategies to gain a foothold, or even advance, in Cap Français.

In Chapter Five I return to France, specifically to the National Assembly in May of 1791, to ask how laboring and middling colonial whites got reduced to the socio-racial category of *petits blancs* in the secondary literature. In a series of debates from May 11-15, the assembled delegates considered whether free men of color should have the

political rights of active citizenship. The free people of color and their supporters engaged in a revolutionary project of social categorization to support their political claims, presenting the propertyless, disorderly "*petits blancs*" as a foil to highlight the free colored virtues of property ownership, social stability, and political loyalty. The second part of the chapter surveys recent historiography to explore how historians have casually picked up and repeated this eighteenth-century rhetoric about the *petits blancs* as though it described historical reality.

In the following chapters, I argue that uncritical descriptions of the *petits blancs* distort our understanding of the social and economic complexities of pre-revolutionary Saint-Domingue. Specifically, portraying the *petits blancs* as marginal troublemakers obscures the extent to which white artisans and retailers invested in slavery, forcibly extracting social and economic capital from the bodies and labor of others. In this dissertation, laboring and middling whites no longer disappear into stereotypes of the resentful mob. Instead, they become visible and culpable as willing participants in sometimes-violent defense of the oppressive, inhumane systems that worked to their benefit.

CHAPTER ONE

MOBILITY AND REPUTATION IN OLD REGIME FRANCE

In February of 1777, Marguerite Rey, governess of the Larchevesque-Thibaud family estate outside of Toulouse, faced a difficult decision. For the past four years, she had kept up an affectionate correspondence with her employer, who was making a name for himself as an attorney in Cap Français. They exchanged news of the vineyard, the colonies, the doings of mutual acquaintances; he asked her to send him small luxury items from France. Better yet, he teased, she could bring them to him herself. She repeatedly, gently, demurred at the thought of the long sea voyage. Now, suddenly, in his latest letter, Larchevesque-Thibaud's tone took on a new urgency. "I'm not writing to you for apricot marmalade, my dearest friend; but to press you most urgently to come join me. I await you with the greatest impatience," he wrote. "Come, you will be happy here, a thousand times happier than you are in France. Come, come, come."[20] In the same packet of correspondence, Marguerite received a letter from the Dubergier brothers, merchants who handled Larchevesque-Thibaud's business in Bordeaux. Larchevesque-Thibaud had sent them a bill of exchange for 600 *livres* to cover her travel expenses. If she wanted to rejoin her master, they wrote, she should begin her preparations as soon as possible: the best time to make the Atlantic crossing was in

[20] "Ce n'est point pour la marmelade d'abricots que je vous écris, ma très chere amie; c'est pour vous presser de plus fort de venir me joindre. Je vous attends avec la plus vive impatience... Venez, vous serez heureuse et mille fois plus heureuse qu'en France. Venez, venez, venez." The National Archives, Kew, Records of the High Court of Admiralty and colonial Vice-Admiralty courts, Intercepted Mails and Papers, [HCA] 30/273, Larchevesque-Thibaud to Marguerite Rey, undated.

early April. They encouraged her to follow Larchevesque-Thibaud's wishes, saying that she "would be a great comfort to him in a country where, as they say, 'maidservants are the true movers.'"[21]

Why begin this dissertation, which focuses on the migrant population of a Caribbean port city, in a vineyard in France? Because, I argue, migrants to Saint-Domingue brought with them identification practices, reputation-building strategies, and expectations of colonial life that took shape in the social and cultural context of Old Regime France. Like internal migration within the metropole, French migration to Saint-Domingue in the aftermath of the Seven Years' War drew on an established set of practices for registering the identities and reputations of mobile individuals. Even when migrants embarked for Saint-Domingue in the hope of creating a new identity, they used metropolitan reputational conventions as their starting point.

The first section of this dissertation explores the social and cultural structures that shaped migration in Old Regime France. As the eighteenth-century state became more concerned with tracking and managing its population, new forms of control and procedures for identification began to take hold. These practices offered a channel through which mobile individuals could still present as legible, and reputable, to the state institutions and local communities through which they moved.

Prospective Atlantic migrants encountered some of the same practices of assessment and documentation as internal migrants. In the second part of the chapter, I

[21] "...les ménagères domestiques sont des veritables déménagères." HCA 30/273, A & P Dubergier, freres, to Marguerite Rey, February 10, 1777. Marguerite seems to have given in to this repeated urging: she appears in a list of passengers departing Bordeaux for Saint-Domingue in September 1777.

use a sample of passenger records from the Amirauté de Guyenne from 1763-1787 to give a demographic sense of the migrants who departed from Bordeaux for Saint-Domingue. I situate these migrants within the broader sweep of migration to Saint-Domingue, but not to argue that they are representative of the migrant population. Instead, this demographic survey sheds light on some of the shared points of reference, social and cultural, that migrants took with them as they crossed the Atlantic.

The chapter concludes with a more speculative section in which I consider migrants' possible motivations for traveling to Saint-Domingue and the knowledge or expectations of colonial life that they brought with them. Migrants learned about life in Saint-Domingue through a variety of more or less trustworthy sources, including word of mouth, travel accounts, and even their shipboard experience on the way to the colony. These preconceived notions, whether confirmed or shattered, would shape their initial strategies for social and economic success in the colony.

Mobility, identity, and control in Old Regime France

In the eighteenth century, multiple established circuits of internal migration wound their way through metropolitan France. A recent line of historical scholarship emphasizes that internal migration was not only the recourse of the criminal or the desperate. As a diversity of individuals moved from place to place, they engaged with state and local structures of identification to articulate claims of respectability that transcended their mobility. These shared conventions for determining identity and community membership also extended to Atlantic migrants seeking to present

themselves to official institutions as legitimate, if temporarily uprooted, members of local communities.

In suggesting that French colonial migrants moved within any kind of communal framework, I depart from much of the existing historiography about French Atlantic migration. Historians tend to view French overseas migration dismissively, in keeping with a broader narrative of early modern French imperial "failure."[22] They emphasize France's small number of migrants, high rates of return, and lack of strong state structures for organization and recruitment. Peter Moogk observes that, in contrast to the settlement-oriented migrants to the British Americas, most French migrants were "reluctant expatriates from their provincial homeland or *patrie*," single men who left France for economic reasons with no intention of remaining in the colonies.[23] He connects this persistent "failure" to populate settler colonies in the Americas to a "widespread French view" in the eighteenth century that no free person would willingly resettle in the colonies, and thus the colonies must have been populated by the forced movement of social outcasts and criminals.[24] David Eltis similarly describes France as "an inert (in out-migration terms) and rather exceptional center in the pan-European context."[25] Silvia Marzagalli concludes that France "ultimately depended on the strength

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[22] Trevor Burnard and Allan Potofsky, "Introduction: The Political Economy of the French Atlantic World and the Caribbean Before 1800," *French History* 25/1 (2011), 7, describe the impact of this narrative. For French historians' lack of engagement with the Atlantic empire, see Cécile Vidal, "The Reluctance of French Historians to Address Atlantic History," *Southern Quarterly* 43 (2006): 153-189.
[23] Peter Moogk, "Reluctant Exiles: Emigrants from France in Canada before 1760," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 46 (1989), 505.
[24] Peter Moogk, "Manon's Fellow Exiles: Emigration from France to North America before 1763," in *Europeans on the Move: Studies on European Migration 1500-1800*, ed. Nicholas Canny (Oxford, U.K.: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 240.
[25] David Eltis, “Introduction: Migration and Agency in Global History,” in *Coerced and Free Migration: Global Perspectives*, ed. David Eltis (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 25.

of merchant networks," as opposed to a state apparatus, to sustain its Atlantic empire.[26] As Emma Rothschild notes, historians of the French Atlantic are still confronting a popular image of "two Frances": "a real France, or *la France profonde*, of the majority of individuals who lived local, small-scale, and immobile lives; and a France of the superficial or fluctuating periphery, of ports, frontiers, and foreign influences."[27] In these accounts, early modern France was a fundamentally sedentary, inward-looking society. Without a positive internal tradition of migration, robust patterns of overseas migration also failed to develop.

However, a number of recent histories challenge the understanding of early modern France as largely immobile and inward-focused. Leslie Choquette argues that migration was "an integral part of life under the Ancién Régime," shaping both individual lives and regional economies.[28] She estimates that before the French Revolution, at least a million men and women embarked on temporary or permanent journeys across the metropole each year. Olwen Hufton, one of the earlier proponents of this revisionist view, describes widespread patterns of economically motivated seasonal migration from province to province, or from province to metropole. These migrants, she argues, were not simply vagabonds or risk-takers, but individuals following clearly defined paths that

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[26] Silvia Marzagalli, "The French Atlantic World in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Atlantic World*, ed. Nicholas Canny and Philip D. Morgan (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2011), 235-237. Also on this point, see Kenneth J. Banks, *Chasing Empire Across the Sea: Communications and the State in the French Atlantic, 1713-1763* (Montreal and Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002); James Pritchard, *In Search of Empire: The French in the Americas, 1670-1730* (Cambridge, U.K., and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
[27] Emma Rothschild, "Isolation and Economic Life in Eighteenth-Century France," *American Historical Review* (October 2014), 1055.
[28] Leslie Choquette, *Frenchmen Into Peasants: Modernity and Tradition in the Peopling of French Canada* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), 1.

their relatives and compatriots had taken before them.[29] Hufton, however, still sees migration as a strategy of the socially and economically marginal, part of the economy of makeshifts adopted by those living at subsistence level.[30] More recently, James Collins has identified a more diverse population of internal migrants, ranging from vagabonds, seasonal migrants, sailors, artisans, and students to an estimated "60,000-70,000 families, usually of some means," who moved every year.[31] Further, Collins finds, people did not move once and then settle, but made repeated moves over the course of their lifetimes. Although many of these moves were across relatively short distances of 10 to 40 kilometers, they added up to "a landscape of motion, of roads alive with ceaseless human migration."[32]

Historians are also rethinking the relationships between internal and external migration. This reflects a growing recognition that France's Atlantic empire had a social, economic, and political impact that reached far into the metropolitan countryside. As Laurent Dubois observes, French overseas migration "was primarily an extension of movement taking place *within* France itself."[33] Similarly, Pierre Force and Emma Rothschild have shown how family economic strategies and local information networks, respectively, could intertwine the fortunes of Caribbean migrants with those of their

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[29] Olwen Hufton, *The Poor of Eighteenth-Century France 1750-1789* (Oxford, U.K.: Clarendon Press, 1974) 70-105.
[30] Hufton, *The Poor of Eighteenth-Century France*, 15.
[31] James B. Collins, "Translation de Domicile: Rethinking Sedentarity and Mobility in the Early Modern French Countryside," *Society for the Study of French History* (2006), 401.
[32] Collins, "Translation de Domicile," 399.
[33] Laurent Dubois, "The French Atlantic," 140.

relatives and compatriots who remained in the French interior.[34] Christopher Hodson sees a relationship between internal politics and overseas migration at the state level as he argues for a previously unrecognized degree of French state intervention in overseas migration. In the wake of the Seven Years' War, he says, schemes for shaping the colonial population became "the ultimate *projet* in a kingdom bursting with *les hommes à projets*."[35]

The French state evinced a new interest in controlling its metropolitan, as well as colonial, population. Over the course of the eighteenth century, techniques and instruments for the identification of mobile individuals became more widespread in application, and more "modern" in form. Written forms of identification, such as passports and identity cards, became more prevalent, as did the practice of recording soldiers, beggars, or other suspect individuals in centralized registers.[36] Artisans, who had previously circulated within *compagnonnage* networks largely on the basis of word-of-mouth reputation, were increasingly required to carry papers that named all of their former masters and attested that they had permission to depart from their previous positions.[37] Urban police forces, particularly in Paris, demonstrated a new concern for

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[34] Rothschild, "Isolation and Economic Life"; Pierre Force, "Stratégies matrimoniales et émigration vers l'Amérique au XVIIIe siècle: La maison Berrio de La Bastide Clairence," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences sociales* 68 (2013).

[35] For increasing state concern with the colonial system and population: Christopher Hodson, "'A Bondage so Harsh': Acadian Labor in the French Caribbean, 1763-1766," *Early American Studies* (2007). For more on state-directed migration post-Seven Years' War: Christopher Hodson, *The Acadian Diaspora: An Eighteenth-Century History* (Oxford, U.K. and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Pernille Røge, "A Natural Order of Empire: The Physiocratic Vision of Colonial France after the Seven Years' War," in *Political Economy of Empire in the Early Modern World*, ed. Sophus Reinert and Pernille Røge (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).; Emma Rothschild, "A Horrible Tragedy in the French Atlantic," *Past & Present* 192 (August 2006): 67-108, explores the disastrous attempt to create a settlement of 13,000 to 14,000 migrants at Kourou, in Cayenne, from 1763-1765.

[36] Vincent Denis, *Une histoire de l'identité: France 1715-1815* (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 2008), 12.

[37] Denis, *Une histoire de l'identité*, 28.

organized, methodical oversight of public space.[38] Keepers of temporary residences such as *auberges* and *garnis* faced new official pressure to consistently record information about their lodgers.[39] In summary, as Vincent Denis explains, by the second half of the eighteenth century, the increased production of written documents, changing policies toward beggars and vagabonds, and new policing practices converged to make the possession of personal identification documents "crucial in order to circulate freely, at least for the members of the popular classes."[40] The forms of written identification that proliferated during the second half of the eighteenth century were less concerned with the qualities that marked each individual as unique--height, hair color, eye color, distinguishing marks--than with the qualities that attested to their integration into society through community, family, or professional networks.[41]

Mobility was not necessarily concerning in itself, but because it implied that an individual was untethered from society, and more specifically, that they refused to engage in useful work.[42] This emphasis on community attachment represented a point of convergence between police concerns and the norms of identification employed by "*le peuple*" themselves, in which "an individual had no qualities except through the community or professional networks that surrounded them."[43] One type of document

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[38] Vincent Milliot, "Saisir l'espace urbain: mobilité des commissaires et contrôle des quartiers de police à Paris au XVIIIe siècle," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine (1954-)*, T. 50e, No. 1 (Jan.-Mar. 2003): 54-80.
[39] Sabine Juratic, "Mobilités et populations hébergées en garni," in in *La ville promise: mobilité et acceuil à Paris (fin XVIIe - début XIXe siècle)*, ed. Daniel Roche (Paris: Fayard, 2000).
[40] Denis, *Une histoire d'identité*, 233.
[41] For the shifting criteria of identification from the Old Regime into the nineteenth century, see Gérard Noiriel, "Surveiller les déplacements ou identifier les personnes? Contribution à l'histoire du passeport en France de la Ie à la IIIe République," *Genèses* 30, "Emigrés, vagabonds, passeports" (1998): 77-100.
[42] Denis, *Une histoire d'identité*, 213.
[43] Denis, 411; Déborah Cohen, *La nature du peuple: Les formes de l'imaginaire social (XVIIIe-XXIe siècles)* (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 2010), 344.

that reflected this shared concern with affiliation was the *certificat d'identité*. Issued by a reputable individual within a local community, usually a parish priest or an employer, the *certificat* demonstrated that the bearer had strong ties to a sedentary community, even if they were temporarily uprooted from it.

The state apparatus of documentation was superimposed over longstanding unofficial practices for organizing and accommodating the internal migrant population. In some rural areas, small landholders often traveled to neighboring provinces to fill seasonal roles as migrant workers in agricultural or building trades. They followed customary patterns of movement, such that observers came to associate specific forms of work with workers' regional origins.[44] Migrants who moved from rural areas to major urban centers in search of employment also found a world of work divided by region. Provincial affinity groups, notably Savoyards and Auvergnats, exercised unofficial monopolies over certain urban trades.[45] Migrants clustered by region of origin in the immigrant *quartiers* that sprang up in cities and large towns. In consequence, as Hufton notes, the rural migrant "did not arrive friendless in the town or city of his destination." Instead, migrants followed relatives or others from their region of origin, who would offer whatever help they could to new arrivals.[46] Finally, the large population of rural migrants that spread out across Paris found "a scaffolding of economic and emotional support" within established neighborhood communities.[47] David Garrioch explains that as the immigrant population of Paris increased over the eighteenth century, Parisian

[44] Hufton, *The Poor of Eighteenth-Century France*, 88-91.
[45] Hufton, *The Poor of Eighteenth-Century France*, 95.
[46] Hufton, *The Poor of Eighteenth-Century France*, 99.
[47] David Garrioch, *The Making of Revolutionary Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 34.

conventions of sociability and communal belonging changed in direct response. Connections as simple as work, family, *pays*, or simply living next door were sufficient to integrate immigrants into the local community.[48] At the same time, in order to more carefully assess immigrants' origins and intentions, Parisians "developed a formal politeness which enabled them to deal with strangers without alienating or offending them, yet without necessarily conveying real warmth, at least at first."[49]

The geographical patterns and social conventions that structured internal migration sometimes extended to migration overseas. The mountainous regions of the Pyrenees and Massif Central had a centuries-long history of sending peddlers and seasonal migrants into Spain.[50] During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, these migration streams branched off to include France's Atlantic colonies. Similarly, Pierre Force observes that when younger sons of Pyrenean noble houses migrated in search of opportunity, their movements were structured by a Pyrenean patronage network that extended both within France and from France to Saint-Domingue.[51]

As recent historiography on internal migration makes clear, a diverse group of migrants circulated in Old Regime France, following established geographical routes and social conventions. This calls into question an older understanding that weak French Atlantic migration was the natural consequence of a sedentary metropolitan society. I suggest a rethinking of the relationship between internal and overseas

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[48] David Garrioch, *Neighbourhood and Community in Paris, 1740-1790* (Cambridge, UK, and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 227.
[49] Garrioch, *Neighborhood and Community in Paris*, 227.
[50] Laurence Fontaine, *History of Pedlars in Europe*, trans. Vicki Whittaker (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996), 8-11, 37, 44-46; also Choquette, *Frenchmen into Peasants*, 196-199.
[51] Pierre Force, *Wealth and Disaster: Atlantic Migration fron a Pyrenean Town in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016).

migration, in terms of a shared set of official and communal practices through which migrants made claims of respectability and belonging.

Migrants from Bordeaux to Saint-Domingue, 1763-1787

French overseas migrants, like internal migrants, navigated both popular understandings of community affiliation and an official apparatus of documentation and identification. By the 1760s, for example, anyone who intended to cross the Atlantic from the port of Bordeaux first had to present a *certificat d'identité et catholicité*, obtained from a priest in their local parish, at the Amirauté de Guyenne. These certificates provide demographic detail about the migrants who departed from Bordeaux and also reveal shared social and cultural points of reference through which migrants claimed respectability by way of community attachment.

The original *certificats d'identité et catholicité* do not survive in the archives, but the voluminous registers of the Amirauté de Guyenne attest to their form and content. As reproduced in the registers, the *certificat* was a short, formulaic document. With only minor variations, it read as follows:

"I attest that [name] from [birthplace], [number] years old, [occupation], professes the Roman Catholic Apostolic faith and wishes to embark on the ship [name], from [home port], captain [name], to go to [destination]. At Bordeaux, [date]."[52]

Register entries were ordered by date rather than by ship or destination. Sometimes entries only list one passenger. In other cases, anywhere from two to seven passengers

[52] Archives départementales de la Gironde, Amirauté de Guyenne, "Certificats d'identité et de catholicité, soumissions et passeports concernant les passagers embarqués à Bordeaux," 6B 53-58.

traveling on the same ship are listed in the same entry as a sequence of names, birthplaces, ages, and occupations before a collective statement about Catholicism and destination. The admiralty clerks did not consistently list passengers' occupations. When family members were traveling together, they made a note of the familial relationship. When enslaved Africans and Afro descendants were forcibly returned to the Caribbean, clerks recorded the names of their owners. Occasionally the records include a terse, generic reason for travel, usually either "for business" or "returning home." Finally, passengers who were able signed their names in the register beneath the record of their *certificat*.

In this chapter, I draw on a sample of 1,411 passengers whose identity certificates were recorded in the admiralty registers between 1763 and 1787.[53] This sample includes travelers to all foreign destinations. 1,308 passengers, a clear majority, were bound for France's Caribbean colonies. Of these Caribbean passengers, 893, or roughly two thirds, embarked specifically for Saint-Domingue.

I do not intend to use this sample to make broad statements about French migration to Saint-Domingue, or to assess who is, or is not, "representative" of Saint-Domingue migrants as a whole. By sheer weight of numbers, of course, the "average" migrant to Saint-Domingue in the eighteenth century was an enslaved African who survived the brutal Middle Passage. The French colonies received nearly a million African captives during the eighteenth century, as compared to 300,000 white

[53] For more detail about this sample, see Appendix A.

migrants.[54] Nearly 700,000 of these individuals were disembarked in Saint-Domingue.[55] In the three decades before the French Revolution, the numbers of enslaved Africans, and their relative proportion of the overall migrant population, continued to grow. While an average of 1,000 white migrants arrived in Saint-Domingue each year from 1763 to 1790, slave imports to the colony in the 1780s averaged between 37,000 and 40,000 annually.[56]

I can, however, produce a composite portrait of a "representative" migrant from Bordeaux to Saint-Domingue. This average migrant was a single man in his mid-20s, traveling alone. He came from one of the towns and villages of the Aquitaine region. He presented as respectable enough that the Admiralty clerks gave him the courtesy title of "Sieur" rather than the dismissive "le nommé." If his identity certificate listed an occupation (which it only did in about 40% of cases), he was equally likely to be a member of the colonial planter, merchant, or military elite as to be a retailer or artisan. Finally, he signed his name below his register entry in a steady, relatively practiced hand. The elements of this sketch offer a starting point for consideration of some broader dynamics of European migration to Saint-Domingue and, further, indicate some shared identification practices and social points of reference that migrants could employ as they sought a foothold in Dominguan society.

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[54] Marzagalli, "The French Atlantic World," 241.
[55] This figure comes from a search of the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database (slavevoyages.org).
[56] John D. Garrigus, *Before Haiti: Race and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 118; R. Darrell Meadows, "The Planters of Saint-Domingue, 1750-1804: Migration and Exile in the French Revolutionary Atlantic" (Ph.D. Diss., Carnegie Mellon University, 2004), 42.

As an overwhelmingly young, male group, migrants from Bordeaux to Saint-Domingue conformed to a long-standing pattern of French Atlantic migration by single men, which stands in contrast to the more gender-balanced family groups characteristic of Atlantic migration to British North America.[57] As Peter Moogk notes, this demographic trend reflects a persistent French tendency to view overseas migration as a temporary relocation for economic reasons.[58]

Women make up a small fraction of the total number of migrants from Bordeaux, but a fraction that is interesting for what it contributes to our knowledge about the intersectional operation of gender and race in Saint-Domingue. In Dominguan society as in the sample of migrants, European-born men vastly outnumbered women. However, white women were an important demographic in colonial society, in both economic and cultural terms.[59] As investors in the economy of slavery and as models of femininity against which women of color were demeaned, they upheld the systems of slavery and racial prejudice that shaped colonial life. I draw attention to European-born women throughout the dissertation in their various roles as wives, apprentices,

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[57] See, for example, Bernard Bailyn, *The Peopling of British North America: An Introduction* (New York: Knopf, 1986); collected essays in Ida Altman and James Horn, eds., *"To Make America": European Emigration in the Early Modern Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Nicholas Canny, ed., *Europeans on the Move: Studies on European Migration, 1500-1800* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994).
[58] Moogk, "Manon's Fellow Exiles," 243-244.
[59] There is an expanding scholarly literature about white women in colonial society. See, for example: Jennifer L. Palmer, *Intimate Bonds: Family and Slavery in the French Atlantic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, Inc., 2016); Marisa J. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Cecily Jones, *Engendering Whiteness: White Women and Colonialism in Barbados and North Carolina, 1627-1865* (Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 2017); Christine Walker, "Pursuing Her Profits: Women in jamaica, Atlantic Slavery and a Globalising Market, 1700-60," *Gender and History*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (November 2014): 478-501; Natalie A. Zacek, "Searching for the Invisible Woman: The Evolution of White Women's Experience in Britain's West Indian Colonies," *History Compass* 7/1 (2009): 329-341.

shopkeepers, and enslavers in order to shed light on this understudied dimension of colonial society.

The occupational profile of the typical migrant from Bordeaux suggests something distinctive about the migration flow that passed through Bordeaux, as compared with other French Atlantic outports. The social and occupational characteristics of the "average" Bordeaux migrant suggest a stable, middling-to-elite social background--thus contradicting the stereotype of the colonial migrant as impoverished, criminal, or otherwise socially suspect. This middling-to-elite skew can be explained by the fact that migration through Bordeaux was private, rather than state-sponsored. They paid their own travel expenses, which constituted a high bar for entry. Pierre Force and James Collins both observe that long-distance relocation, as opposed to movement within a small geographical radius, required a certain level of means.[60] A voyage to the Antilles could cost anywhere from 200 to 800 *livres*, depending on the amount of luggage a passenger brought and the quality of accommodations.[61] For the lowest fares, passengers could bring one trunk and were lodged among the crew. The highest-paying passengers could bring three trunks and dine at the captain's table.[62]

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[60] Pierre Force, "Stratégies matrimoniales et émigration vers l'Amérique au XVIIIe siècle: La maison Berrio de La Bastide Clairence," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences sociales* 68 (2013), 79; Collins, "Translation de domicile," 402.

[61] Meadows, "The Planters of Saint-Domingue," 54.

[62] James E. McClellan III, *Colonialism & Science: Saint Domingue in the Old Regime* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 24. Stephen Russell Berry, *A Path in the Mighty Waters: Shipboard Life and Atlantic Crossings to the New World* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2015), 23, gives a concrete sense of these different accommodations: "Those who could afford it, or who were thought to deserve it—such as clergy—stayed in the captain's suite of rooms at the stern of the vessel called the 'cabin.' These quarters usually consisted of a ring of small sleeping chambers (termed 'staterooms') that opened onto a large center room. On bigger ships, when weather permitted, the great cabin received light and air from windows in the stern, which created a brighter, more pleasant, interior space. These cabin accommodations gave privileged passengers access to the better food of the captain's table and sequestered them from the rest of the passengers and crew. Individual and family

Pierre Force found that the Lamerenx family, of Navarre, spent a total of 1,200 *livres* to send their eldest son to Saint-Domingue. Of this, 300 *livres* went to pay for the voyage itself. This afforded a *passage en droiture*: a direct Atlantic transit without stopping along the African coast along the way. The family put the remaining 900 *livres* toward assembling a *pacotille* of goods that their son could sell to support himself when he arrived in the colony, and also toward the elaborate wardrobe of "vests, suit, coat, shoes, silk stockings, and epée" that would let him "maintain his standing as a gentleman" upon arrival.[63] To put these sums in context, a French artisan would typically make around 300 *livres* in an average year.[64]

Privately funded passage was only one possible way for European migrants to travel to the Caribbean. None of the Bordeaux migrants, for example, traveled as *engagés*, their passage paid in exchange for three years of indentured labor. During the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, the *engagé* system recruited mobile, single, young men from the lower-to-middling ranks of society, often artisans or day laborers, to provide colonial labor.[65] Although the *engagé* system was not officially ended until 1774, it had largely fallen into disuse by mid-century. The captains of merchant ships often ignored the formal requirement that they transport six *engagés* on

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sleeping quarters in the cabin gave passengers a degree of privacy with wooden walls and latching doors... Although sometimes broken up into smaller 'cabins' by impermanent dividers, for the most part steerage (sometimes called 'the hold' by passengers) consisted of a long multifunctional space spanning the width of the vessel in which eating, working, socializing, and sleeping occurred. The length of the space accentuated its limited height, but few passengers experienced steerage when it was not cluttered with bunks, baggage, or people. In contrast to the cabin, privacy was a rare thing in steerage."

[63] Force, "Stratégies matrimoniales," 89-90.

[64] Michael Sonesnscher, *Work and Wages: Natural Law, Politics, and Eighteenth-Century French Trades* (Cambridge, U.K., and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 203-205.

[65] Gabriel Debien, *Le peuplement des Antilles françaises au XVIIe siècle: Les engagés partis de La Rochelle (1683-1715)* (Cairo: Les Presses de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire, 1942) remains the definitive source on the *engagé* system.

each journey to the colonies, preferring to pay the fine of 60 *livres* for noncompliance.[66] The requisite six "*places d'engagés*" instead came to be filled by individuals traveling to the colonies in royal service and at royal expense.

Enlistment in a colonial regiment represented another alternative for aspiring colonial migrants who did not have the financial resources to pay for their passage to Saint-Domingue, much less a *pacotille* of goods to support them upon arrival. The writer of an anonymous travel account found himself in this situation in 1784. His parents could have afforded to send him to Saint-Domingue with a generous *pacotille*, he claimed, but they refused. Instead, his mother leveraged family connections to secure a place for him in the Régiment du Cap. He arrived in Saint-Domingue in February 1785 as one of the six hundred new recruits sent to the colony each year.[67] His education and family resources made this writer atypical among colonial recruits. A quick sample of 217 men recruited as colonial troops in 1763-1764 reveals a strikingly different list of backgrounds. Among them: bonnet-maker, butcher, baker, carpenter, cook, day-laborer, stonemason, tailor, wigmaker, and "unemployed".[68] The colonial regiments had consistently high rates of desertion, as many recruits (including the anonymous writer mentioned before) ran away to try their luck in the booming plantation economy.[69]

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[66] Jacques de Cauna, *L'Eldorado des Aquitains: Gascons, Basques et Béarnais aux Iles d'Amérique (XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles)* (Biarritz: Atlantica, 1998), 123.
[67] Anonymous, *Manuscrit d'un Voyage de France à Saint Domingue, à la Havanne et aux Unis états D'amérique, Contenant le sejour de la personne qui écrit, avec une Description Genérale, de toutes les Cultures de St. Domingue, Un rapport des Evenemens de la revolution de ce pays, qui ont eu lieu depuis 1789 Jusqu'en 1804, Diverses observations Politiques, & autres Details divisés en deux Parties.* Premiere Partie, 8-15.
[68] Sample drawn from ANOM, Fonds militaires, D2A 35.
[69] Trevor Burnard and John Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine: Atlantic Capitalism in French Saint-Domingue and British Jamaica* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 55, note that in 1766, two weeks after a contingent of 647 soldiers debarked at Cap Français, 44 of them had already deserted; Anon., *Manuscrit d'un voyage*, 18-19.

Large numbers of French men also traveled to Saint-Domingue as part of the crews of merchant ships. Colonial observer Médéric-Louis-Élie Moreau de Saint-Méry estimated that in 1788, there could be up to 2,000 French sailors in the port of Cap Français at any given time. While ships spent weeks at anchor in colonial ports, sailors blended into the urban population in cafés and wineshops and while selling their own small *pacotilles* at the waterfront Marché des Blancs.[70] One of the main responsibilities of the police force at the port was the pursuit of deserting sailors: like soldiers, sailors sometimes abandoned their ships to pursue new colonial lives.[71]

Finally, migration to Saint-Domingue and other Caribbean colonies followed what could be called the "*île-de-France* pattern."[72] Parents from a wide range of social backgrounds whose children were violent, disobedient, or otherwise troublesome could petition for *lettres de cachet*. While these petitions often requested that a disorderly individual be locked up in a convent, prison, or hospital, some instead called for their exile "to the Islands."[73]

The "average" migrant from Bordeaux to Saint-Domingue, like all passengers who registered *certificats d'identité et catholicité* in Bordeaux, could claim recognition as a member of a parish community. This situates the Bordeaux migrants among the

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[70] Moreau de Saint-Méry, Méderic-Louis-Élie. *Description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie française de l'isle de Saint-Domingue, Avec des Observations générales sur sa Population, sur le Caractère et les Moeurs de ses divers Habitants; sur son Climat, sa Culture, ses Productions, son Administration, &c. &c*. Tome premier. A Philadelphie, 1797, I: 492; 317.
[71] Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Déscription de la partie française*, I: 480.
[72] Jean Hébrard, personal communication.
[73] For examples, see Arlette Farge and Michel Foucault, *Disorderly Families: Infamous Letters from the Bastille Archives*, ed. Nancy Luxon, trans. Thomas Scott-Railton (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 216-224.

overwhelming majority of the French population who articulated their identities and reputations through the religious and social structures of the Catholic church. These practices could be effectively replicated in Saint-Domingue. The white inhabitants of France's Caribbean colonies had a reputation for irreligiosity. However, even when not particularly bound by Catholic observance and morality, they structured their lives through Catholic rituals--notably, given colonial mortality rates, funerals.[74] In addition, residents of Saint-Domingue utilized parish records of births, marriages, and deaths to assert status claims and inscribe themselves as members of local communities.[75]

Finally, just as rural migrants to French cities turned to their provincial compatriots for help, the typical migrant from Bordeaux to Saint-Domingue, with his roots in the Aquitaine region, would also be able to call upon regional connections for support when he first arrived in the colony.[76] As late as 1788, three-fourths of the white population of Saint-Domingue had been born in Europe.[77] Jacques Houdaille, in his demographic survey of Saint-Domingue, estimated that 40% of these European-born Dominguans came from the Aquitaine region.[78] Jacques de Cauna also emphasizes the

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[74] Vincent Brown, *The Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, U.K.: Harvard University Press, 2008), is an excellent source for the central importance of rituals around death in the context of high colonial mortality.
[75] Rebecca J. Scott and Jean M. Hébrard, *Freedom Papers: An Atlantic Odyssey in the Age of Emancipation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012), exemplifies this analysis.
[76] I determined regional origins with reference to De Cauna, *L'Eldorado des Aquitains*, 23-24, who defines the Aquitaine region as the former provinces of Guyenne and Gascogne. Guyenne was bordered on the north by Saintonge, Angoumois, Limousin, Auvergne; on the east by Languedoc; on the south by Gascogne; and includes the regions of Bordeaux, Landes, Bazas, Agen, Perigord, Quercy, and Rouergue. Gascogne was bordered on the north by Guyenne; on the east by Languedoc and Comte de Foix; on the south by Navarre and Bearn, and included Condom, Armagnac, Albret, Chalosse, Labourde and Soule (Basques), Bigorre, Comminges, and Auch.
[77] Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Déscription de la partie française*, I:9.
[78] Jacques Houdaille, "Quelques données sur la population de Saint-Domingue au XVIIIe siècle," *Population (French Edition)*, Vol. 28, No. 4/5 (July-October 1973), 864; also, Rothschild, "Isolation and Economic Life," 1062-1063, for the Limousin and Angoumois as traditional zones of out-migration. For

role of Aquitains in populating Saint-Domingue. He points to several regional factors that encouraged out-migration: a zone of attraction oriented toward Bordeaux by the direction of the rivers that crisscrossed the region; longstanding patterns of seasonal migration that fed into outmigration; and the Gascon tradition of single-heir inheritance that led younger sons to seek their fortunes elsewhere.[79] In addition, de Cauna describes Aquitaine as a region where "a clear particularism, a unique identity and unity," persisted until the French Revolution.[80] This regional affinity carried over to Saint-Domingue, where subtle local distinctions--such as that between Basques and Béarnais--disappeared with distance.[81]

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more on Bordeaux: Paul Butel, *Les négociants bordelais, l'Europe et les îles au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Aubier, 1974); Jean-Pierre Poussou, *Bordeaux et le sud-ouest au XVIIIe siècle: croissance économique et atttraction urbaine* (Paris: Éditions de l'Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales: Touzot, 1983); Paul Butel and Jean-Pierre Poussou, *La vie quotidienne à Bordeaux au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Hachette littérature, 1980).

[79] de Cauna, *L'Eldorado des Aquitains*, 25-33. Richard Drayton, "The globalisation of France: Provincial cities and French expansion c. 1500-1800," *History of European Ideas* 34 (2008), 426, for riverine networks.

[80] Jacques de Cauna, *L'Eldorado des Aquitains*, 9.

[81] de Cauna, *L'Eldorado des Aquitains*, 24.

Figure 1: Bordeaux and the Aquitaine region.

A sample of 1,411 *certificats d'identite et catholicité* registered at the Amirauté de Guyenne is not broadly representative of the 30,000 European migrants who traveled to Saint-Domingue in the decades after the Seven Years' War. It is still less representative of total migration to Saint-Domingue during those same years, when hundreds of thousands of enslaved Africans were forcibly debarked in the colony. However, the "typical" migrant that emerges from this sample--a man in his mid-20s, from the Aquitaine region, who could assemble significant financial resources--invites questions about other elements of European migration to Saint-Domingue. In addition, the

demographic details of this "composite migrant" illuminate aspects of migrants' metropolitan identities that they could use to integrate into colonial communities.

Metropolitan expectations and colonial knowledge

When migrants departed from Bordeaux for Saint-Domingue, they brought expectations and preconceptions as well as material and cultural resources. Preconceived notions of colonial life, whether they proved true or false, would shape migrants' early experience of the colony. The final section of this chapter explores some of the economic, social, and cultural paths along which information about the colonies penetrated into the Aquitain countryside and considers what migrants might have gleaned from these sources. This section raises a complicated question that I will continue to pursue throughout this dissertation: how, and when, did European migrants to Saint-Domingue began to think of themselves as "white"?[82] I suggest that this

[82] My thinking about whiteness as a quality that is learned and strategically adopted derives in part from the extensive scholarship in the field of "whiteness studies." My most immediate influences from this field are: Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998); David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991); and Cheryl I. Harris, "Whiteness as Property," *Harvard Law Review*, Vol. 106, No. 8 (June 1993): 1707-1791. In addition, Matt Wray, *Not Quite White: White Trash and the Boundaries of Whiteness* (Durham, N.C., and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 41-46, traces the origins of the American English term "poor white trash" to 1830s Maryland, where the enslaved population criticized free white laborers (often immigrants). This origin among enslaved observers, in a context of struggle over social boundaries and resources between expanding populations of free blacks and white immigrants, forms an interesting parallel to "*petits blancs*." For a broader, critical survey of the "whiteness studies" literature, see: "Scholarly Controversy: Whiteness and the Historians' Imagination," *International Labor and Working-Class History* No. 60 (Fall 2001): 1-92, particularly the essays by Eric Arnesen and Barbara J. Fields; also Peter Kolchin, "Whiteness Studies," *Journal de la Société des américanistes*, Vol. 95, No. 1 (2009): 117-163; David Lambert, "Liminal Figures: Poor Whites, Freedmen, and Racial Reinscription in Colonial Barbados," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, Vol. 19 (2001): 335-350.

racialized self-perception began before migrants departed from France, and was refined on shipboard during the Atlantic crossing.

Migrants rarely left direct testimony about their motives and expectations that led them to travel to Saint-Domingue. The rare exceptions include a Parisian secretary who wanted to go to Cap Français "to seek fortune there," the widow of a knife-maker in La Rochelle who hoped that her three sisters in Port-au-Prince might be able to help her "find some resources," and a writer who made plans to go to the colony after reading about it in a travel account.[83] There is also the dramatic account of Renée Bagé, a former actress with the Opéra de Paris. She wrote an impassioned letter to a Marine official in 1776, in which she explained that she had left Paris for the islands three years before, because "a planter from Saint-Domingue with whom she was acquainted had given her a glimpse of the fortune to be made there through commerce."[84] The Paris police, however, took a different view of Bagé's actions. When the official wrote to them asking if they had any information about Bagé's previous conduct, a police lieutenant responded that she had always engaged in "the most irregular conduct, and she only left in 1773 to escape the pursuit of her creditors, of whom there were a great number,

[83] ANOM, Secrétariat d'État à la Marine - Personnel colonial ancien, COL E " Hautavoine, Jean Baptiste d', désirant passer à Saint-Domingue, pour y occuper ses talents 1783"; "ANOM, Col E 205, "Castaing, Françoise, veuve de Jean Gilbert, maître-coutelier, originaire de la Rochelle, demande à passer à Saint-Domingue 1770"; Anon., *Manuscrit d'un voyage*, 6. Travel accounts from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries created a popular-culture image of Saint-Domingue as a libertine paradise, and thus likely contributed to migrants' decisions to make the Atlantic crossing. For more about the image of Saint-Domingue in contemporary travel narratives, see Doris Garraway, *The Libertine Colony: Creolization in the French Caribbean* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005).

[84] "[L]'exposante se determina à quitter Paris et a passer aux isles: un habitant de St. Domingue dont elle avoit fait la connoissance la décida pour cette isle en lui faisant entrevoir une fortune à y faire par le moyen de comerce." ANOM, SCOL E 14, "Bagé, Renée, ancienne actrice de l'Opéra de Paris, habitante et commerçante de Saint-Domingue 1774/1776."

some of whom, we are sure, she must have swindled."[85] These rationales all accord with the widely-accepted explanation that French migrants traveled to Saint-Domingue led by popular writings, images, and rumors, in search of social advancement and a quick colonial fortune.

However, written and oral accounts from the early and mid-eighteenth century did not prepare migrants for the social and economic conditions they would find in Saint-Domingue after 1763. Some of these differences had roots in economic and demographic trends from the late 1750s and early 1760s. Others resulted from the upheaval of the Seven Years' War and the consequent administrative re-visioning of France's colonial empire.

[85] "[E]lle a toujours tenu et tient encore à Paris la conduite la plus irréguliere, et elle n'en est partie en 1773 que pour se soustraire aux poursuites de ses creanciers qui etoient en trés grand nombre et dont on assure qu'elle avoit escroqué une partie." ANOM, COL E 14, "Bagé, Renée."

Figure 2: The Caribbean region and the French West Indies.

Economic opportunities in Saint-Domingue shifted as a result of the expansion of coffee cultivation that began in the 1760s. Coffee plantations came to fill the colony' mountainous regions, where they took over nearly all of the "frontier" land unclaimed by the sugar estates that spread across the plains. Coffee production, less capital- and labor-intensive than sugar, attracted small landowners, both free people of color and whites. As migrants from Europe continued to arrive in the colony with hopes of land ownership, this closing of the "plantation frontier" and the prominence of free colored coffee planters led to new tensions around the blurred colonial "color line."[86]

[86] For the economic and social consequences of coffee cultivation, see Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "Motion in the System: Coffee, Color, and Slavery in Eighteenth-Century Saint-Domingue," *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Winter 1982): 331-388.

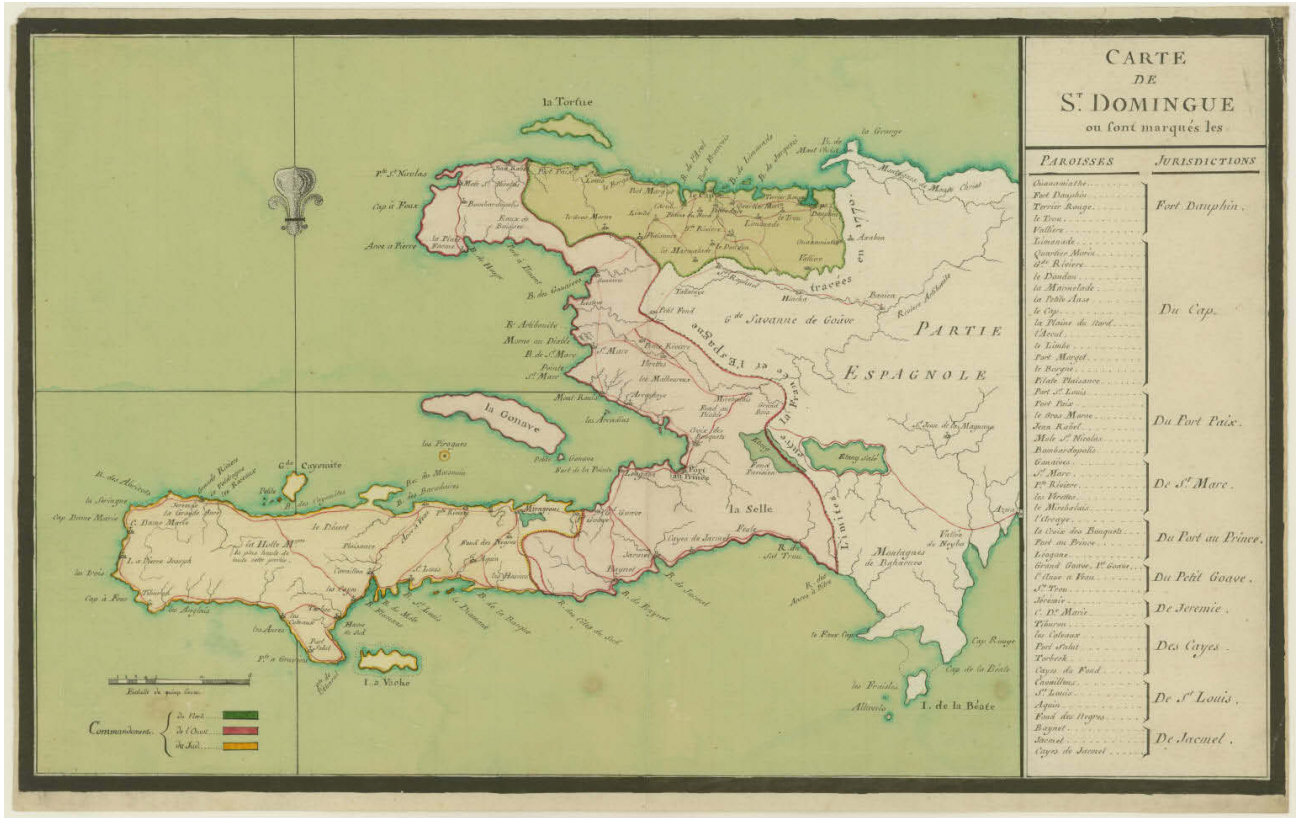

Figure 3: "Carte de St. Domingue ou sont marqués les Paroisses Jurisdictions," 1770.

The Seven Years' War, and later the American War of Independence, also shaped the Dominguan economy of the late eighteenth century. As Paul Cheney explains, the trade disruptions occasioned by recurrent warfare "had the effect of blocking continuous growth in trade; boom-bust cycles robbed planters and merchants alike of their margins for maneuver and accentuated systemic weaknesses."[87] To counter these pervasive market uncertainties, plantation owners in Saint-Domingue had to take on progressively higher levels of debt and invest larger amounts of capital in

[87] Paul Cheney, *Cul de Sac: Patrimony, Capitalism, and Slavery in French Saint-Domingue* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), 108.

their estates. This trend, in combination with the scarcity of available land, limited new arrivals' opportunities to invest in the plantation sector.

The Seven Years' War also gave rise to a series of policy shifts and experimental projects designed to reconfigure the relationship between France and its colonies. Metropolitan administrators, eager to preserve the lucrative Caribbean colonies, attempted a series of military, economic, and social reforms aimed at increasing colonial security, revising the trade relationship between metropole and colony, and strengthening the loyalties of the colonial population.[88] The military reforms, in particular, sparked popular revolt, while the Dominguan elite, resentful of the new spirit of metropolitan interventionism, began to embrace a distinctive "Creole" identity.

Finally, the demographic imbalance between the enslaved and free population of Saint-Domingue became steadily more pronounced over time. The "Mackandal Affair" of the late 1750s, in which an enslaved man named François Mackandal organized a plot to poison white enslavers, gave the colony's free minority a sharp reminder that they were surrounded and vastly outnumbered by a potentially rebellious enslaved population. However, the forced importation of enslaved Africans only increased. In the decade after the end of the American War of Independence, slaving voyages increased by 100 percent, bringing an average of 26,000 African captives to Saint-Domingue every year between 1783 and 1791.[89] By 1789, roughly 90% of the colonial population

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[88] For more about post-Seven Years' War reforms: Pernille Røge, Economistes *and the Reinvention of Empire: France in the Americans and Africa, c. 1750-1802* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 4-14 and 37-50; Garrigus, "Reform and Revolt after the Seven Years' War," in *Before Haiti*; Marion F. Godfroy-Tayart de Borms, "La guerre de Sept ans et ses conséquences atlantiques: Kourou ou l'apparition d'un nouveau système colonial," *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Spring 2009): 167-191.

[89] Cheney, *Cul de Sac*, 127.

was enslaved. Enslavers allayed their own fears about this dramatic imbalance by implementing a regime of repressive brutality designed to keep the enslaved population in a perpetual state of subordination.

Migrants from the Aquitaine region might have picked up some current, practical knowledge of Saint-Domingue from Aquitain migrants who returned to France or sent news back to their families. Pierre Force notes that the disinherited "*cadets de Gascon*" who left for Saint-Domingue sometimes went on to fill a new role in their family as the wealthy "*oncles d'Amérique*" who welcomed the next generation to the colony.[90] Further, the information shared through regional patterns of colonial migration did not only impact the immediate families of migrants, but could have what Emma Rothschild calls a "multiplier effect," spreading information and expectations about colonial life widely through migrants' communities of origin.[91]

Bordeaux was tied into Atlantic commercial networks that could also serve as channels for the circulation of information. Bordeaux, along with Nantes and La Rochelle, was one of France's three major sugar ports.[92] During the eighteenth century, these three ports combined received more than three fourths of all the sugar entering France. Nantes was the leading port during the first half of the century but had been "decisively displaced" by Bordeaux by the end of the Seven Years' War. Bordeaux's mid-century sugar boom occurred when the city's sugar merchants shifted their focus

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[90] Force, "Stratégies matrimoniales," 94.
[91] Rothschild, "Isolation and Economic Life," 1063.
[92] Information in this paragraph comes from Robert Louis Stein, *The French Sugar Business in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 107-111; Thomas M. Doerflinger, "The Antilles Trade of the Old Regime: A Statistical Overview," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (Winter 1976), 408-411.

from Martinique to Saint-Domingue. From 1767-1776, an average of 63,000,000 pounds of sugar arrived in Bordeaux yearly. Thomas Doerflinger estimates that at least two fifths of the city's trade activity was direct trade with the Caribbean and between one third and one half of the remainder involved the re-export of Caribbean commodities.[93]

Migrants who lived and worked along the waterfront in Bordeaux may have gotten a material, visual understanding of the sheer volume of colonial trade. Pierre Allary, who worked as a sugar refiner before traveling to Saint-Domingue, likely witnessed firsthand the business of sugar importation. Amant Champés and Gaspart Hillaire, from the waterfront neighborhoods of Saint-Rémy and Saint-Michel, respectively, may have watched outbound ships being loaded with French food, wine, and luxuries, or slave ships being fitted out for the voyage to the African coast.

Aquitaine, oriented toward Bordeaux by a shared dialect, political interests, and the converging flow of a regional river network, also tapped into Atlantic economic and informational networks. The Aquitaine region supplied a substantial portion of the European foodstuffs and artisanal goods sent to the colonies. By the end of the Old Regime, Robert Stein estimates that ships from Bordeaux supplied Saint-Domingue with 72% of its salted beef, 88% of its flour, and 93% of its wine.[94] Migrants from deep in the provincial countryside might have based their colonial expectations on these economic connections as they saw the wealth of goods flowing into the colony, and the massive quantities of sugar, coffee, and indigo returning to France.

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[93] Doerflinger, "The Antilles Trade," 409.
[94] Stein, *The French Sugar Business*, 111; Drayton, "The globalisation of France," 426; Daniel Heimmermann, *Work, Regulation, and Identity in Provincial France: The Bordeaux Leather Trades, 1740-1815* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 40.

If migrants from Bordeaux and Aquitaine developed expectations of colonial wealth based on the example of returning migrants and the volume of Atlantic trade, when and how did they encounter the idea of race? French Atlantic racial ideologies and regimes had metropolitan as well as colonial roots. For this reason, it feels important to pose the question in a metropolitan context, even as my answers remain speculative.

Migrants might have learned about the colonial racial order and the benefits of whiteness through one of the rumors, stories, or songs about Saint-Domingue that circulated through the metropole. One such song included the refrain: "In France, you get ahead through rank / or courage, wisdom, wealth, or blood / but to be thought a personage / leave all that behind; here, it's enough to be White."[95] Migrants drawn to Saint-Domingue by the promise of social mobility may have embraced "whiteness" as a way to rapidly ascend the social hierarchy.

Migrants might also have begun to articulate a sense of whiteness in response to the growing number of enslaved and free people in France. Sue Peabody estimates that 3,242 slaves and 358 free people of color passed through Bordeaux over the course of the eighteenth century.[96] Across France, the number of people of color grew during the second half of the eighteenth century, particularly after the Seven Years' War. Peabody ties this growing presence to the increasing prevalence of racist stereotypes in public

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[95] "En France, l'on tire avantage de l'éclat du rang/ du courage, du savoir, des biens ou du sang/ mais pour se croire un personnage/ laissant là cet étalage, il suffit ici d'être Blanc." Verses by Gabriel-François de Brueys d'Aigalliers, arrivé à SD en 1763, in J. Fouchard, Plaisirs de Saint-Domingue, 1955, 81-88. Quoted in Frostin, *Les révoltes blanches*, 319.

[96] Sue Peabody, *"There Are No Slaves in France": The Political Culture of Race and Slavery in the Ancien Régime* (New York and Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 1996), 4.

discourse.[97] Migrants may have become more aware of their "whiteness" through personal interactions with people of color, or through exposure to increasingly racist public opinion.

Finally, the Atlantic crossing from France to Saint-Domingue afforded passengers an opportunity to reassess their social and racial identities. Historian Stephen Russell Berry describes shipboard life as "a formative stage" during which European travelers began to adopt "other forms of collective identification."[98] Migrants who embarked for Saint-Domingue with only the slightest knowledge of the operation or significance of racial categories sometimes traveled alongside passengers--whites and people.

The passenger list for one vessel, the *Saint-Sauveur*, suggests how shipboard life could expose migrants to the diversity of colonial society in microcosm, weeks before their arrival in Saint-Domingue.[99] On March 27 and 28, 1763, eight passengers registered to embark on the *Saint-Sauveur*, bound for Cap Français. Felix Bordenave, a nineteen-year-old shopkeeper from the town of Agen, was likely making the voyage for the first time. Five of his fellow passengers were returning--or being forcibly returned--to the colony. François Louis Pantaleon *chevalier* d'Héricourt, a *habitant*, traveled with Pamphile, an enslaved mulatto. Fifteen-year-old François Hector, of the Congo nation, was being sent back to his enslaver, a ship captain in Cap Français. Two free people of color also traveled on the *Saint-Sauveur*: Françoise, a free black woman returning to

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[97] Peabody, *There Are No Slaves In France*, 68-72.
[98] Stephen Russell Berry, *A Path in the Mighty Waters: Shipboard Life and Atlantic Crossings to the New World* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2015), 6.
[99] ADG, Amirauté de Guyenne, 6B 56, March 27-28, 1778.

her home in le Cap, and François Bessiere, a mulatto originally from Port-au-Prince. White merchants Bernard Bourda and Antoine Delbreil might have made the Atlantic crossing before, as part of overseeing their long-distance business concerns.

By bringing people from such disparate backgrounds together in close confines, sailing vessels functioned as "contact zones"--a term used by anthropologist Mary Louise Pratt to refer to "the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict."[100] During the five to eight weeks they spent crossing the Atlantic, French migrants had the opportunity to learn more about racial categories and their practical applications, whether through word of mouth or by observation.

This chapter explores dynamics of internal migration in Old Regime France and surveys a group of overseas migrants at their point of departure to lay the groundwork for the chapters that follow. During the eighteenth century, internal migrants followed customary patterns and appealed to unofficial communal norms to portray themselves as reputable despite being uprooted from their community of origin. As migrants engaged with a growing state apparatus of oversight and documentation, they translated preexisting reputational claims into new forms of written identification. Because overseas migration represented an extension of the patterns of internal

[100] Quoted in Berry, *A Path in the Mighty Waters*, 4.

migration, Atlantic migrants could deploy these same conventions for identification, both customary and official.

A demographic survey of overseas migrants who embarked at Bordeaux opens up questions about the details and patterns of migration to Saint-Domingue. Further, it reveals how shared metropolitan social and cultural reference points, namely religious and regional identities, could function as tools for individual migrants to begin building identities in the colony. This and the previous section describe migrants in the metropole as making strategic identity claims, assessing reputations, and maneuvering within institutional frameworks. The following chapters explore how migrants continued to employ these practices in the colony, and how they adapted them to new conditions and frameworks.

Migrants' initial experiences in Saint-Domingue would not only be dictated by the economic, social, and reputational resources they brought from the metropole. Their motivations, expectations, and preexisting knowledge of colonial life would also shape their experiences and decisions as they sought a foothold in colonial society. Migrants from Bordeaux and the Aquitaine region likely based their expectations of Saint-Domingue on rumors and travel accounts, but they may also have obtained information through the channels of trade and migration that connected the region to the French Atlantic world. Finally, I suggest that migrants began to develop a racial consciousness before they left France, and while en route to Saint-Domingue. This idea of whiteness would be strengthened and refined after migrants reached the colony.

CHAPTER TWO

LEARNING THE CITY OF CAP FRANÇAIS

As ships from France first approached the port of Cap Français, the city itself remained hidden by the ominous bulk of the Morne du Picolet. The bare stone of the hillside was not a view to inspire confidence. Passengers who were making the Atlantic crossing for the first time may have doubted their decision: could this really be the way to a major port, and a colonial fortune? Once past the Morne, the bay opened out and the city came into view, gaining size and detail as the ship neared. Oceangoing vessels anchored in the deep water of the bay, where they were met by local canoes that ferried passengers to shore. As newcomers stepped onto the quay, they formed their first impressions of the colony on which they had placed such high hopes. Moreau de Saint-Méry imagined the astonishment and confusion that new arrivals experienced: "What a spectacle! How different it is from the places left behind! You see four or five dark or black faces for one white. The clothing, the houses, and practically all of the physical surroundings, have a new character."[101]

For migrants who disembarked in Cap Français, their first days in the city would prove foundational to their understanding of colonial society. As they learned to

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[101] "Quel spectacle! Comme il diffère des lieux qu'on a quittés! On voit quatre ou cinq figues noires ou obscurcies pour une blanche. Les vêtemens, les maisons, et presque tous les objets physiques dont ont est environné, ont un caractère nouveau. Dans l'étonnement, dans la confusion qu'ils jettent dans l'esprit, on avance et la ville semble étendre." Médéric-Louis-Élie Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Déscription topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie française de l'isle de Saint-Domingue, Avec des Observations générales sur sa Population, sur le Caractère et les Moeurs de ses divers Habitants; sur son Climat, sa Culture, ses Productions, son Administration, &c. &c.*, Tome premier (A Philadelphie, 1797), 295-296.

navigate the city, they simultaneously received their first lessons in what social and cultural resources were at their disposal, and how to make use of them to attain wealth and status. Above all, migrants discovered that the city ran according to two structuring logics. The white population of Cap Français found in the city an atmosphere of social and economic dynamism. At the same time, enslaved and free colored residents felt the constant, controlling pressure of urban institutions designed to defend the white colonial population and uphold the cultural privileges of whiteness. In this chapter, I argue that these twin urban forces of socio-economic dynamism and racial control set the terms by which migrants from France adapted metropolitan economic and social strategies to achieve colonial success.

Cap Français (also known by its short form, "le Cap") may have seemed unusual to first-time visitors, but in many respects it was a typical Caribbean port city.[102] Its resident population of around 15,000 in 1788 was comparable to Charleston, home to

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[102] There is an extensive secondary literature on the port cities of the early modern Caribbean. As a start: Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, Matt D. Childs, and James Sidbury, eds., *The Black Urban Atlantic in the Age of the Slave Trade* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013); Anne Pérotin-Dumon, *La ville aux îles, la ville dans l'île: Basse-Terre et Pointe-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe, 1650-1820)* Paris: Karthala, 2001); Franklin W. Knight and Peggy K. Liss, eds., *Atlantic Port Cities: Economy, Culture, and Society in the Atlantic World 1650-1850* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990); James E. McClellan, *Colonialism and Science: Saint-Domingue in the Old Regime*)Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); Rashauna Johnson, *Slavery's Metropolis: Unfree Labor in New Orleans during the Age of Revolutions* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Lawrence N. Powell, *The Accidental City: Improvising New Orleans*. Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 2012; Dantas, Mariana L.R. *Black Townsmen: Urban Slavery and Freedom in the Eighteenth-Century Americas*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008; Shannon Lee Dawdy, *Building the Devil's Empire: French Colonial New Orleans* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Guadalupe García, *Beyond the Walled City: Colonial Exclusion in Havana* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016); Marisa J. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Alejandro de la Fuente, *Havana and the Atlantic in the Sixteenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Hart, Emma. *Building Charleston: Town and Society in the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic World*. Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2010; Trevor Burnard and Emma Hart, "Kingston, Jamaica, and Charleston, South Carolina: A New Look at Comparative Urbanization in Plantation Colonial British America," *Journal of Urban History* 39 (2012).

an estimated 16,359 in 1790, and far smaller than Philadelphia, with approximately 42,444 in the same year.[103] Le Cap also bore a visual resemblance to other Caribbean and North American ports, as it was laid out in a rational, roughly rectangular grid.[104] Cap Français was also a commercial entrepôt, a nexus where local coastwise trade, circum-Caribbean commerce, and the Atlantic commodity market all came together. Caribbean ports commonly functioned as economic links between local plantation societies and their regional and Atlantic trade partners.[105] Finally, le Cap, like other Caribbean ports, was shaped by a constant tension between metropolitan order and local contingency. As Vincent Brown argues, all Caribbean societies were characterized by "mobility and uncertainty--arrivals and departures of migrants, precarious crop cycles, and market fluctuations."[106] And yet, Shannon Lee Dawdy offers the reminder that colonial cities were also dictated by imperial designs.[107] This interplay created a "'generative fusion,' or creative adaptation," that was characteristic of Caribbean ports.[108]

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[103] Jacob M. Price, "Summation: The American Panorama of Atlantic Port Cities," in Knight and Liss, *Port Cities*, 263.
[104] Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Déscription de la partie française*, Vol. I, 299-300, for urban grid; for other rational/grid cities, see: García, *Beyond the Walled City* (Havana); Pérotin-Dumon, *La ville aux îles* (Point-à-Pitre and Basse-Terre); Dawdy, *Building the Devil's Empire* (Louisiana).
[105] Burnard and Hart, "Kingston, Jamaica and Charleston, South Carolina"; Burnard and Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine*; Gregory E. O'Malley, "Slavery's Converging Ground: Charleston's Slave Trade as the Black Heart of the Lowcountry," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 74 (2017); essays in Knight and Liss, *Atlantic Port Cities*.
[106] Vincent Brown, *The Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, U.K.: Harvard University Press, 2008), 4.
[107] Dawdy, *Building the Devil's Empire*, 4.
[108] Philip D. Morgan, quoted in Burnard and Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine*, 50.

Figure 4: René Phélipeau, "Plan de la ville du Cap François et de ses environs dans l'Isle Saint-Domingue," (Paris: Phélipeau, 1786).

In the first part of the chapter, I explore some of the cultural, economic, and demographic trends that gave Cap Français its dynamic quality. To begin, the city went through a period of rapid growth and refinement starting in the 1760s. It boasted an array of places to gather for entertainment, sociability, and the exchange of news. Cap Français was also an economic powerhouse, channeling both Atlantic commodity exports and regional trade through its port. Finally, the city was in constant demographic upheaval due to its large "floating population" of soldiers and sailors and the high mortality rates that prevailed due to tropical disease. Taken together, these characteristics set a tone of commercial individualism, to which migrants would adapt as they sought a foothold in the urban marketplace.

The second half of the chapter turns to the other pervasive reality of life in Cap Français: a built environment, legal regime, and social norms designed to defend and uphold whiteness at the expense of enslaved and free people of color. This was partly achieved demographically, as the urban population included a higher ratio of whites to people of color than elsewhere in the colony. In addition, the city's arsenal, permanent garrison, and prison represented a constant show of force. Finally, the racial order was enforced and contested in city streets, through fistfights and public punishments. Migrants from France thus learned, in practice, the advantages of whiteness. They also discovered that the colonial legal system would usually uphold their claims of white privilege--but not always. The status of whiteness needed to be actively asserted and defended at an individual level.

Cap Français was a typical Caribbean port city, where a dynamic of fluidity, exchange, and creative adaptation met the public institutions that ordered colonial society. Migrants from France who remained in le Cap found a society and economy in motion, marked by the rapid turnover and exchange of goods, people, and information. At the same time, they discovered the mechanisms in place to defend colonial whites. These overlapping forces of commercial individualism and white supremacy formed the framework within which migrants would strive for colonial success in Cap Français.

"The most turbulent place one could imagine..."[109]

In the last decades of the eighteenth century, the city of Cap Français grew and thrived in step with Saint-Domingue's booming plantation economy. Increased port traffic and new institutions for urban sociability supported local dynamism. However, risky markets and high mortality rates meant that this wealth of possibility could easily tip into precarity. In this section, I argue that this confluence of factors formed one framework for migrant strategies for advancement, as hopeful new arrivals from France balanced the possibilities of self-invention with the need for a wide safety net of social connections.

By the mid-1760s, as migrants from France began to arrive in steadily greater numbers each year, Cap Français had started to develop from a rough frontier outpost into a more substantial settlement.[110] This dynamic growth was particularly evident during the 1770s and 1780s, when the permanent urban population rose from an estimated 4,464 in 1771 to 15,000 in 1788.[111] By the 1780s, Cap Français was the largest French city in the Americas, boasting 79 public buildings and 1,400 houses.[112] The city did not only grow in population, but also attained a new level of cultural refinement. By the 1780s, residents of le Cap could socialize, be entertained, and exchange news in a variety of venues. These sites of sociability included the theater,

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[109] "[L]e pays le plus remuant que l'on puisse imaginer;" Michel-René Hilliard d'Auberteuil, *Considérations sur l'état présent de la colonie française de Saint-Domingue: Ouvrage politique et législatif; présenté au ministre de la marine*, Tome premier (A Paris, 1776), 159.
[110] Burnard and Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine*, 52-53. Pérotin-Dumon, *La ville aux îles,* puts this urban transformation in the context of a broader project of civic development in the French Caribbean in the aftermath of the Seven Years' War.
[111] Burnard and Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine*, 51.
[112] Burnard and Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine*, 54.

tree-lined public squares, bathhouses, boarding houses, and an array of cafés, billiard-halls, and wineshops.[113]

Cap Français was also a dynamic site of economic activity. By the 1780s, the city was responsible for about 35% of the colony's export trade. The urban economy was oriented almost exclusively around the port and its constant flow of goods: plantation commodities of sugar, coffee, and indigo going out; enslaved Africans and European luxury goods coming in. Ships making the transatlantic voyage from France typically first made landfall along the colony's northern coast, which made Cap Français, the largest of the North Province's ports, a popular first stopping point. Further, nearly half of the infamous *négriers*, inbound from the coasts of West and Central Africa, sold part of their enslaved cargo in Cap-Français before continuing along the coast of Saint-Domingue.[114] By the beginning of the 1790s, there could be as many as 170 ships in the harbor on an ordinary day, drawn from throughout the Atlantic world. Moreau de Saint-Méry inventoried the ships at anchor to "give the idea of the commerce of which this city is the seat, and which is greater than in any other place in the Colony."[115] Many of the ships that Moreau listed sailed from French Atlantic ports: Bordeaux, Nantes, Marseille, Bayonne, Le Havre, Honfleur, Dunkerque, La Rochelle, Saint-Malo, Lorient, Rochefort. Others hailed from North America and the circum-Caribbean: Louisiana, Havana, the Windward Islands, Sainte-Croix, Saint-Eustache, Curaçao, and others. In

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[113] James McClellan, *Colonialism and Science*, 75-108, for urban life and amenities in Saint-Domingue.
[114] Burnard and Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine*, 60.
[115] "...que le port du Cap offre un tableau très-animé, très-varié et qui donne l'idée du commerce dont cette ville est le siége, et qui est plus grand que dans aucun autre lieu de la Colonie." Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Déscription de la partie française*, Vol. I, 481.

addition, the harbor hosted local commerce, as *caboteurs*, pirogues, canoes, fishing and passenger boats wove their way among the larger vessels.

Conversely, the dominance of the port in the local economy meant that the livelihoods of plantation owners, merchants, and urban retailers and artisans were all at the mercy of the Atlantic market. One's prospects for success rose or fell in step with fluctuations in the volume of trade. When migration from France increased in the mid-1760s, the twin engines of the sugar and coffee trade were gathering speed and momentum after the slowdown caused by the Seven Years' War.[116] Saint-Domingue's plantation economy, and thus its Atlantic commerce, continued to grow until the late 1770s, when the British-French naval conflict of the American Revolution forced a sharp downturn in commerce between France and the Caribbean.[117] A migrant from Rochefort, who arrived in 1778, struggled to make ends meet. "Even though I work like a drudge, it is all I can do to stay alive," he wrote. "[R]ents are impossibly high, and so are food prices."[118] Six months later, conditions had not improved. A soldier in the local garrison wrote to his father, "we fear every day that the English will take the colony. Their ships always pass in front of le Cap, and they seize every ship which leaves the

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[116] Paul Cheney, "War and Profit," in *Cul de Sac: Patrimony, Capitalism, and Slavery in French Saint-Domingue* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), for the boom-and-bust cycles created by war in the Caribbean.

[117] Manuel Covo, "Commerce, empire et révolutions dans le monde atlantique: La colonie française de Saint-Domingue entre métropole et États-Unis (ca. 1778-ca. 1804)," (Thèse de doctorat, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales 2013); Silvia Marzagalli, "The failure of a transatlantic alliance? Franco-American trade, 1783-1815," *History of European Ideas* 34 (2008); Jean Tarrade, *Le commerce colonial de la France à la fin de l'ancien régime: l'évolution du régime de l'Exclusif du 1763 à 1789*, Tome II (Thèse d'état, Université de Paris, 1972).

[118] "quoique je travaille comme un mizerable cest tout ce que je puis faire pour vivre... les loyers sont hors de pris ainsi que les vivres," British National Archives, High Court of the Admiralty, Intercepted Letters 30/303, letter to Madame Visté rue St Paul pres l'eglise de St Louis, a Rochefort, from husband, September 7, 1778.

harbor," he complained. "[This] makes life very hard for us...we can have nothing in this country... you are certainly lucky to be in France, where you won't experience the scarcities of war."[119]

In the early 1780s, the Atlantic trade in plantation commodities not only recovered, but soon exceeded its prewar volume.[120] Further, new commercial avenues began to open up in 1783 when Cap Français became a free port, legally permitted to engage in trade with foreign powers.[121] The acceleration and expansion of oceanic trade translated into increased opportunities for migrants seeking their fortune in the city. The Widow Lehoux advanced from baker to sugar merchant, writing to her son in Paris that "the perspective for commerce is very advantageous because the Americans are coming here, as well as other strangers, so there will be more resources in le Cap than ever."[122]

The numerous vessels that arrived in and departed from the port of Cap Français facilitated the movement of people as well as goods. The city had a large "floating population" comprised of soldiers, sailors, and other temporary residents who treated le

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[119] "...qui nous rende la vie bien dure, nous ne pouvont rien avoir dans ce pays...vous âyte bien heureux daitre en frence vous ne recenté pas la misere de la guerre...nous creignon tous les jour que les englois ne prenne la colonie, il sont toujour croize de vean le cap, tous les navirre qui en sorte il les prenne," HCA 30/305, letter to M Pain de la Maingottiere, Maitre chirurgien a Partenay en Poitou, from son, January 3, 1779. Covo, "Empire, commerce, et révolutions"; Marzagalli, "The failure of a transatlantic alliance?"

[120] Tarrade, *Le commerce colonial*, 502.

[121] Tarrade, *Le commerce colonial*, 525-526.

[122] "la perspective du comerce est tres avantajeuse parceque les engles ameriquen vont venir icy incy que les etranges il y ora plus de resource au Cap que james," HCA 30/282, letter to M LeHoux, a l'Hotel de Bourgogne, a Paris, from veuve Lehoux June 1782. More on American shipping, incl: Silvia Marzagalli and Bruno Marnot, *Guerre et économie dans l'espace atlantique du XVIE au XXe siècle* (Pessac: Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 2006).

Cap as a springboard to another destination.[123] A local hospitality industry of inns, boardinghouses, cafés, and taverns sprang up to support this mobile population. These establishments also served the needs of new migrants from France, offering temporary lodging, social connections, news, and economic information. Further, this hospitality industry offered business opportunities. Moreau de Saint-Méry observed that "the occupation of innkeeper or boardinghouse owners is open to whoever wants to take it up."[124] Monsieur Bellet, a migrant from Le Havre, took advantage of this state of affairs. He wrote to his wife expressing his intentions to stay in Cap Français: "I have formed an association with [Liaut] from Honfleur. We are going to set ourselves up along the waterfront, running an inn."[125]

Just as economic dynamism could tip over into market volatility, high mortality rates were the negative face of social fluidity. Yellow fever and other maladies devastated the population of Cap Français, proving particularly lethal to Europeans who arrived in the colony with no previous experience of tropical disease.[126] Vincent Brown has observed that death, omnipresent in Caribbean societies, had a profound influence on the development of social tensions and cultural practices.[127] For newcomers to the

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[123] Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Déscription de la partie française*, Vol. I, 492, estimates 1,000 men in the garrison, 2,000 passengers and sailors in French ships, 400 in American or other neutral ships, and 150 carried by local *caboteurs*, adding approximately 3,500 to the regular population of 15,000.
[124] "Le métier d'aubergiste et de logeur, est celui de quiconque veut le prendre." Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Déscription de la Partie française*, I: 487.
[125] "...je suis assosié avec [Liaut] donfleur. Nous allere nous etablir sur le bord la mer a tenir obberge," The National Archives, Kew, Records of the High Court of Admiralty and colonial Vice-Admiralty courts [HCA] 30/264, letter to Mme Bellet demeurant au Havre proche le Caffé Lionnois, from husband, September 24, 1778.
[126] For the impact of tropical disease on colonial society, along with Brown, *The Reaper's Garden*, see J.R. McNeill, *Mosquito Empires: Ecology and War in the Greater Caribbean, 1620-1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
[127] Brown, *The Reaper's Garden*, 4-6.

city, the illnesses and deaths that surrounded them could be particularly demoralizing. As Philippe Urcée, a soldier in the Régiment de Gatinois, confessed to his parents:

> You told me that the climate where I am is prejudicial to the French because of the great heat, which is unbearable. I am trying to bear it, with perseverance, but of the sixty-three men with whom I departed from France, I cannot count but seven now. I am the only one who has not been sick, thanks be to God. It is only the fevers of the country that cause so many to die. I hope the Lord will show mercy and bring me out of the folly of my enlistment.[128]

This perpetual demographic turnover contributed to a persistent feeling of rootlessness and lack of connection among the urban white population.[129] "We are not astonished to see a man fall ill, be ruined, and die between one day and the next," claimed one writer who had spent some time in the city. "We are accustomed to all of these catastrophes. We are so familiar with death that it seems as though we will all die several times in our lives."[130]

On the other hand, individuals fortunate enough to survive their first encounter with tropical disease gained an important social resource: the perception that they had become acclimated to the colony and attained immunity against the so-called *maladie du pays*. As Madame de Sarran, a seamstress, reassured her husband in Paris, "it is the matter of a month or two until European blood changes into Creole. All the newly

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[128] "Vous me marqué que le climas ou je suis est prejudicial au francois a cauze des grandes chaleurs qui sont insuportable je tacherois de les suporter avec perseverence quois que de soixante trois hommes que nous avons party de France, je ne somme plus que sept pour le present, ils ny a que moy qu'ils na pas eté malade grace a dieu il ny a que les fievre du pays qu'ils les fais beaucoub mourir jespere que le seigneur me fera la grace de me rétirer de ma foly de mon engagement." HCA 30/280, letter to M Hurcée au Pecq sous St Germain en Laye, from Philippe Urcée, soldat au regt de Gatinois, June 25, 1778.
[129] Burnard and Garrigus, *Plantation Machine*, 64-6.
[130] "nous voyons sans etonnement qu'un homme est, malade, ruiné, et mort, [elu] jour, au lendemain, nous sommes accoutoumes a toutes ces catastrofes, nous sommes si familliers avec la mort quil semble que nous mourions plusieurs fois dans la vie." HCA 30/280, letter fragment.

disembarked undergo the revolution of the climate, through pustules that resemble the red spots of smallpox. Those on whom they scab over are free of the illness of the country."[131] Kathryn Olivarius has argued that in antebellum New Orleans, socially acknowledged immunity to a lethal disease--which she terms "immunocapital"--gave white migrants who survived yellow fever greater access to political, economic, and social power.[132] In Cap Français as in New Orleans, migrants who survived their first encounter with tropical fever gained standing in the community because they had gained (the presumption of) time. As it became more likely that they would continue to survive, they were seen as more creditworthy, better able to command the labor of others, and more deserving of access to elite social circles.[133]

In Cap Français the possibilities of sociability and a thriving economy, in combination with the risks of unstable markets and deadly diseases, encouraged migrants to hastily forge social connections that might (if they were lucky) prove profitable. Anthropologist Julie Kleinman, in her study of modern African immigrants who gather at Paris's Gare du Nord, observes that these immigrants (who think of themselves as "adventurers") frequent the station because of its centrality within transportation networks. The constant flow of people through the station is a constant source of opportunity for adventurers, who "seek to create social ties with strangers and

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[131] "cest encore lafaire d'un mois ou deux jusqu'a ce que le sang europeen soit changé en créol, tous les nouveaux debarques eprouve la revolution du climat, par des boutons qui s'eleve partout le corps qui resembe au rougeurs de la petite verolle ceux a qui il vient des cloux sont quite de la maladie du pays," HCA 30/280, letter to M Sarran, marchand d'etoffes de soye rue St Honoré pres celle du Roulle aux Deux Amis de Lyon, a Paris, from wife, June 28, 1778.
[132] Kathryn Olivarius, "Immunity, Capital, and Power in Antebellum New Orleans," *American Historical Review* Vol. 124, Issue 2 (April 2019), 425.
[133] Olivarius, "Immunity, Capital, and Power," 426.

bring them into their social networks, a practice akin to what Robert Putnam and others have called 'bridging social capital' (as opposed to 'bonding social capital,' which is focused on kin and community networks)."[134] In eighteenth-century Saint-Domingue, migrants sometimes expressed a similar willingness to engage in quick social connections. One man, who had actually begun his colonial adventure as an overseer on a plantation outside of Les Cayes, lost his position after a dispute with the estate manager. He decided to seek a new start in Cap Français, calling it "a quarter that is said to be more mobile than Cayes."[135] Jean LeCoq, a sailor from La Rochelle, decided not to return to France on the basis of a connection formed in the city. As he eagerly explained to his mother:

> I have decided to stay in this country, and I will find my fortune. The brother of the captain with whom I made the last voyage, who is here staying with his uncle, made me the offer that if I was of a mind to stay, he would undertake to get me a good position in a cooper's shop that belongs to a *bourgeois* that is worked by ten blacks, and I will be the master, to direct the work without anyone to contradict me, and besides I will do the buying and selling and keep the books and settle accounts every month, and as for my wages, they will be 1,000 *ecus* a year and lodging.[136]

Another sailor, André Hypolite Fleury, found a similar reason to consider staying in the city. The ship's master had adopted him "as his own son," and was himself undecided

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[134] Julie Kleinman, *Adventure Capital: Migration and the Making of an African Hub in Paris* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019), 98.

[135] "un quartier qu'on dit être plus passant que celuy des Cayes," HCA 30/282, letter to M Darripe jeune, ecuyer conseiller secretaire du roy, et directeur de la monnoye de Bayonne, from Pascal Darripe, June 12, 1778.

[136] "je suis désidé de rester dans ce pays et [dalieur] je trouve mon bonneur il y a le frere du capitaine avec qui jaitai le voyage dernié qui est isi chez son oncle qui ma fait une propansition qui si jaitais dans le dessin de resté qui ce chargé de ma donné une place avantageuse ils se trouve que ces une boutique de tonnelier qui appartien a un bourgeois de ces aury qui est montée de dix noirs et moy je divis etre le metre pour mener louvrage sens que personne me contredise dalieur ces moy qui doit vendre et acheter et je tien un livre et je regle compte tous les mois a legard de mes gaje [ces] son de mille ecus par ans et logé." HCA 30/303, letter to Madame veuve LeCoq, marchande, rue Sain Jean du Perot a La Rochelle, from Jean LeCoq, [July] 9, 1778.

whether to return to France or try to establish himself in le Cap. "[W]hatever he does, I'll follow his lead," Fleury determined.[137]

Norbert Thoret's account of his arrival in Cap Français in 1790 offers an extreme version of how such quick connections could work to a migrant's advantage. Thoret made his way from the waterfront to the residence of Monsieur Astier, a fellow native of Bourbonne, to deliver some letters. While he and Astier discussed the latest news from France, another acquaintance arrived: Monsieur Horiot, also from Bourbonne. Horiot immediately invited Thoret to his sister's house for dinner; Astier, "without leaving [Thoret] time to make a response, observed that in this country, everyone is very easygoing," and urged him to accept. That evening, Horiot introduced Thoret to his sister, Madame Jambard, "as a compatriot who just arrived from France." The lady and her husband gave Thoret an effusive welcome and invited him to stay in their house--where yet another acquaintance from Bourbonne was already lodging.[138]

The high degree of mobility among the population of Cap Français also resulted in the relative absence of traditional metropolitan guarantors of identity.[139] Chance friendships or the discovery of a shared hometown could provide the basis for a new social network. They did not, however, anchor migrants in the community as tightly as family connections, long-term neighborhood residence, or urban enclaves of provincial

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[137] "le maitre madopte comme son propre fils et luy même est en decy sil doit revenir avec le navire et tel il fera je le suiveré parce quil doit setablir icy." HCA 30/264, letter to M LeRoy, rue Grans Croisant parr St François au Havre, from André Hypolite Fleury, September 25, 1778.
[138] "Mr Astier, qui ne me laissa temps de faire une réponse, me fit observer que dans ce pays on agissait sans façon et il m'engagea à accepter. Mr Horiot me présenta chez Madame Jambard, sa soeur, comme un compatriote qui venait d'arrive de France," Thoret, *Vie aventureuse*, 9-10.
[139] Burnard and Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine*, 50.

migrants had in France.[140] Newcomers thus had more leeway to create an image or identity for themselves, and to present this image to strangers, who couldn't appeal to conventional community sources for either confirmation or contradiction. This aspect of the city's mobility could be as much a challenge as an advantage, as the line between self-invention and deception could be thin. Hilliard d'Auberteuil captured this double edge, writing of le Cap, "it is here that Speculators, Pawnbrokers, and Resellers have great gains to make; it is here that there are precipitous revolutions in all types of commerce; it is here, also, that all sorts of dealings, frauds, and usury are conducted."[141]

One of the fundamental frameworks of urban life in Cap Français was social and economic dynamism. Like other Caribbean ports, le Cap functioned as both a cultural center and a commercial entrepôt. This enabled migrants to pursue fast-moving opportunities in a spirit of commercial individualism. Unstable markets and high mortality, as the flip side of colonial dynamism, encouraged migrants to cast wide social nets in the hope of mitigating risk and turning a profit. Cap Français did not appear quite so freewheeling, however, to its free colored and enslaved inhabitants. The following section explores another urban framework: the enforcement of a white-dominated racial order.

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[140] For more on metropolitan identities: Déborah Cohen, *La nature du peuple: Les formes de l'imaginaire social (XVIIIe-XXIe siècles)* (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 2010), 344-349; Arlette Farge and Jacques Revel, *The Vanishing Children of Paris*; Olwen Hufton, *The Poor of Eighteenth-Century France, 1750-1789* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1974), 98-99; David Garrioch, *Neighbourhood and Community in Paris, 1740-1790* (Cambridge, UK, and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 40.

[141] "[C]'est là que les Spéculateurs, les Agioteurs et Revendeurs ont de grands coups à faire; c'est-là qu'il y a des révolutions précipitées sur toutes sortes d'objets de commerce; c'est là qu'il se fait aussi toutes sortes de négociations, de fraudes et d'usures." Hilliard d'Auberteuil, *Considérations*, Vol. I, 159.

"[The] respect due to the quality of Whiteness..."[142]

Like other Caribbean port cities, Cap Français was designed to defend the white colonial population against attacks both from without (pirates, foreign powers) and within (slave revolt, above all). Both urban demographics and disciplinary institutions worked to uphold white status and keep the African and African-descended population in check. Further, in the racialized social order of Cap Français, distinctions between whites and free and enslaved people of color were omnipresent in the organization of public space and the performance of daily activities.[143] At the same time, racial categories remained the subject of improvisation and contestation, and the prevailing official tendency to reward whiteness was never absolute. As migrants engaged with a racialized urban society, they learned several lessons. They discovered the value and power of claiming whiteness for themselves, the willingness of legal authorities to uphold those claims, and the fact that official support was never consistent: whiteness had to be constantly defended on an individual basis.

The racial demographics of Cap Français were less imbalanced than the colonial average. Of course, as David Geggus has remarked, "the imbalance between black and white in Cap Français, as in Saint Domingue as a whole, was extreme."[144] By 1788,

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[142] "*[le] respect dû à la qualité de Blanc..."* Médéric-Louis-Élie Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Loix et constitutions des colonies françoises de l'Amérique sous le vent* (Paris: 1784), Vol. VI, "Ordonnance du Juge de Police du Cap, qui défend de continuer à insulter un Particulier. Du 19 Février 1782," 228.
[143] As Rashauna Johnson expresses it: "Urban space became a key site on which leaders sought to impose an ideological geography onto the diverse and fractured territory through hierarchies of race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability." *Slavery's Metropolis*, 13.
[144] David Geggus, "The Slaves and Free People of Color of Cap Français," in *The Black Urban Atlantic in the Age of the Slave Trade*, ed. Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, Matt D. Childs, and James Sidbury (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 121.

enslaved Africans and Afro descendants still made up a clear majority, 67%, of the city's permanent population of 15,000. People of color accounted for 10% of the free population, with whites as the remaining 23%. Factoring in the floating population of 3,500 soldiers and sailors who were in the city at any given time, the proportion of whites grows to nearly one-third of 18,500.[145] By sharp contrast, the ratio of whites, free people of color, and enslaved individuals across the colony as a whole stood at, respectively, 5%, 5%, and 90%.[146] The urban concentration of whites, particularly soldiers and sailors, discouraged any armed uprising among the enslaved population.

The white colonists of Cap Français defended their racial interests not only through numbers, but through institutions of force. Beginning in 1773 a permanent military presence, the Régiment du Cap, was garrisoned in the city.[147] These soldiers were a constant presence in urban life. They did artisanal work and took shifts as theater guards to supplement their wages, or mixed with the local population in billiard-halls and wineshops. One colonial recruit who joined the Régiment du Cap in 1785 regularly left the barracks to pursue temporary employment as a clerk. As he reminisced in a later account of his travels, "I wrote fairly well, so I never lacked for work with the notaries."[148] The fortified arsenal that anchored one end of le Cap's waterfront also

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[145] Garrigus and Burnard, *The Plantation Machine*, 60. Phil Morgan, personal communication, for the addition of soldiers and sailors.
[146] Garrigus and Burnard, *The Plantation Machine*, 60.
[147] Charles Frostin, "Les 'enfants perdus de l'État' ou la condition militaire à Saint-Domingue au XVIIIe siècle," *Annales de Bretagne* Tome 80, no. 2 (1973), 322.
[148] "Je ne manquois pas d'argent; je m'occupois en ville. Ecrivant assez bien, je ne manquois pas d'ouvrage chez les Notaires." Anonymous, *Manuscrit d'un Voyage de France à Saint Domingue, à la Havanne et aux Unis états D'amérique, Contenant le sejour de la personne qui écrit, avec une Description Genérale, de toutes les Cultures de St. Domingue, Un rapport des Evenemens de la revolution de ce pays, qui ont eu lieu depuis 1789 Jusqu'en 1804, Diverses observations Politiques, & autres Details divisés en deux Parties*, I:18.

stood as a concrete reminder of the military force that urban whites could bring to bear.[149] Finally, the centrally-located prison stood as a perpetual threat: enslaved people who were caught in the city without permission were held in prison until they could be returned to their enslaver or sold at public auction.[150]

The white supremacist racial order of Cap Français was also enforced through routine daily practices, including the labor performed throughout the city for the maintenance of public space. Just as Marisa Fuentes has observed of Bridgetown, Barbados, in Cap Français dirty and demeaning tasks were overwhelmingly carried out by people of color.[151] Beginning in 1764, the municipal police of Cap Français implemented an urban trash collection service as part of their efforts to maintain clean streets. Every morning, four gangs of enslaved laborers could be seen driving mule-carts through the city streets, collecting the waste that urban residents left piled at the roadside.[152] Throughout the day, enslaved and free laundresses could be seen at work in the ravine that snaked past the Hôpital de la Providence along the city's northern edge, while others traveled between town and ravine, bringing new bundles of dirty linen to be washed.[153] Funeral processions frequently passed through the streets, the

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[149] Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Déscription de la partie française*, I: 454.
[150] For urban prisons as reinforcers of racial order: Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, 20; Johnson, *Slavery's Metropolis*, 143-144.
[151] Marisa Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, 23.
[152] Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Loix et constitutions*, Vol. IV, " Premiere Assemblée du Bureau Général de Police municipale tenue au Cap, touchant, 1o. son installation; 2o. la réception du Greffier; 3o. une taxe sur les Cabrouets et Tombereaux; 4o. une Loterie municipale; 5o. le versement les [sic] Droits de deux pour cent, et des Amendes de Police dans la Caisse du Bureau; 6o. les Tombereaux destinés au nettoyement de la Ville; 7o. et enfin, les Emplacemens non bâtis, et les Quais du Cap. Du 30 Juin 1764," 775-776; Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Déscription de la partie française*, Vol. I, 485. These workers were supplied by the chaîne publique: see Rashauna Johnson, *Slavery's Metropolis*, 144, for public chain gang as reinforcing logic of racialized labor.
[153] Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Loix et constitutions*, Vol. V, "Arrêt du Conseil du Cap, touchant des Lavoirs particuliers qu'on vouloit établir sur la Ravine de la même Ville. Du 11 Novembre 1776," p. 743.

dead carried to their final resting place by 4 to 6 men enslaved by La Providence. The remains of a few particularly notable or wealthy individuals were laid to rest in the crypt of the church, but most of the dead of Cap Français were taken beyond the southern limit of the city, to the cemetery of La Fossette.[154]

The urban white population, including recent migrants, did not only observe the public and demeaning labor of people of color--they were encouraged to surveil and enforce it. In 1781, for example, when the municipal police sought to address the problem of garbage being illegally thrown in the Ravine instead of the Fossette, they imposed a fine on offenders, and further "[a]uthorize[d] residents living beside and near the ravine *and all other Whites*, to stop Black trash carters who try to dump waste in the ravine, and to have them conducted to the City prisons."[155] This ordinance, like other edicts and judgments, was printed and posted in prominent locations throughout the city. However, migrants could exercise oversight of people of color at work in individual shops and households as well as the open spaces under municipal jurisdiction. As Brett Rushforth has shown for Montréal, enslaved laborers in closely bounded urban spaces were subject to the surveillance of neighbors and passersby as well as their enslavers.[156] In addition, the city's weekly newspaper, the *Affiches Américaines*, invited

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[154] Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Loix et constitutions*, Vol. IV, "Ordonnance des Administrateurs, qui accorde aux Maisons de Providence du Cap le privilége exclusif de fair porter les Morts. Du 15 Mai 1765," p. 854.
[155] "Autorisons les particuliers demeurans le long et auprès de la ravine et tous autres Blancs, d'arrêter et de faire arrêter les Négres porteurs d'immondices qui voudroient les jeter dans ladite ravine, et de les faire conduire dans les prisons de cette Ville." Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Loix et constitutions*, Vol. VI, "Ordonnance du Juge de Police du Cap, pour le transport des Immondices dans les Marécages de la Fossette, et empêcher qu'il n'ait lieu dans la Ravine. Du 11 Avril 1781," 121. Emphasis mine.
[156] Brett Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slaveries in New France* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press and Williamsburg, VA: Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 2012), 323.

its readers into a shared project of racialized surveillance. Each issue inevitably included a series of runaway slave advertisements, asking readers to watch for them and occasionally offering a reward for information about their whereabouts.

The runaway advertisements in the *Affiches Américaines* also reinforced a powerful lesson about whiteness: it protected its possessors from the particular forms of violence used to inscribe enslaved status on people of color. Enslavers who advertised for their lost "property" in the *Affiches* often gave physical descriptions, which frequently included detailed accounts of brands, scars, and injuries. To give just one example, when Baptiste ran away from a plantation in the nearby parish of Dondon, his enslaver advertised in the *Affiches*, offering a reward of 150 *livres* for his capture. Aspiring slavecatchers could recognize Baptiste by the words branded on him, "J'ANIN and beneath it AU DONDON," and by his "body covered with whipping scars."[157] This lesson in whiteness was particularly pronounced in Cap Français, where the majority of the enslaved population was African-born, and thus more likely than those born in the colony to be branded.[158] Further, many urban free people of color had formerly been enslaved, and thus still bore the marks of their enslavement.[159]

The racial order was also reinforced publicly through legal measures to command the deference, and control the luxurious displays, of free people of color. In the 1770s, colonial administrators passed a series of laws intended to reinforce the

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[157] *Supplément aux Affiches Américaines*, (Cap Français: Imprimérie Royale, 1764-), accessed through the Digital Library of the Caribbean, https://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00021836/00001?search=affiches+=americaines, p. 4, "Esclaves en maronage," May 23, 1772.
[158] Geggus, "The Slaves and Free People of Color of Cap Français," 110.
[159] This insight is borrowed from Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, 19, which makes the same point about the free(d) community of color in Bridgetown.

subordinate status of the free people of color.[160] These included sumptuary laws, intended to make that line clearly visible in daily life. Regulations imposed in 1779 targeted free people of color for "the extreme luxury of their clothing and adornments," warning them to dress with the simplicity and modesty "essential to their state" and avoid "everything that seems excessive, or near excess." Colonial administrators conceived of public display as a matter not only of dress, but also of comportment and deference. The same edict urged free people of color to show "decency and respect," and held that "dazzling and expensive ornaments" could lead to displays of arrogance "and the scandal which always accompanies it."[161]

Sumptuary laws and other attempts to reinforce racial subordination often met pushback, sometimes even violent contestation. People of color had their own understandings of the gradations of colonial society, which they could and did assert publicly, in defiance of official or implicit restrictions on their behavior. On December 3, 1779, *la femme* Castillon, the wife of an artilleryman named Herpin, was on the rue Espagnole when Françoise, a free *mulatresse*, shouted at her: "*Houra!*"[162] Castillon

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[160] For more detailed discussion of these changes, see John D. Garrigus, *Before Haiti: Race and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), Chapter 5, "Citizenship and Racism in the New Public Sphere," 141-170; Garrigus and Burnard, *The Plantation Machine*, 184-185.

[161] "...cette classe des Sujets du Roi, dignes de la protection du Gouvernement lorsqu'ils se contiennent dans les bornes de la simplicité, de la décence et du respect, appanage essentiel de leur état... en autorisant l'usage modéré, exclut tout ce qui seroit excès ou voisin de l'excès; c'est sur-tout l'assimilation des Gens de couleur avec les personnes blanches, dans la maniere de se vêtir, le rapprochement des distances d'une espece à l'autre dans la forme des habillemens, la parure éclatante et dispendieuse, l'arrogance qui en est quelquefois la suite, le scandale qui l'accompagne toujours." Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Loix et constitutions* Vol. 5, "Réglement provisoire des Administrateurs, concernant le Luxe des Gens de couleur. Du 9 Février 1779." 855.

[162] Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Loix et constitutions*, Vol. VI, "Arrêt du Conseil du Cap, touchant des Mulâtresses insolentes, et l'évasion de l'une d'elles des Prisons. Du 9 Juin 1780," 30-32. The record of this case, and of the others discussed in this section, survive because they were appealed to the Conseil du Cap. Otherwise, they would probably have disappeared after being settled in criminal court: Gene E.

immediately turned and demanded to know whether the word had been directed at her. "Yes, soldier's wife," Françoise shot back, adding further insult. Castillon, incensed, picked up a handful of rocks from the street and threw them at Françoise, and the two women flew at each other. Another free *mulatresse*, Marie-Anne, quickly joined the fight on Françoise's side, slapping at Castillon and landing at least one solid hit. Several years later, another incident began when a group of white men were seated outside a house and a group of men of color passed them in the street.[163] Jean-Baptiste, the slave of *la nommée* Rossignol, allegedly set things in motion when he kicked a dog that belonged to one of the seated men. Michel, a free *mulatre* who worked as a *caboteur*, then threw a rock, which rock hit and damaged a chaise, then ricocheted hard enough to strike one of the whites, Sieur LeRoi, and knock him over. Finally, Jean-Baptiste Firmin, a black man "claiming to be free," added insult to injury by making a series of

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Ogle, "Policing Saint Domingue: Race, Violence, and Honor in an Old Regime Colony" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2003), speculates that the records of the criminal court of le Cap were usually destroyed soon after they were produced. This means that although I suspect these incidents weren't all that out of the ordinary, I can't definitively say that they were representative. For a more thorough analysis of the forms and meanings of cross-racial violence in Saint-Domingue, see Gene E. Ogle, "Natural Movements and Dangerous Spectacles: Beatings, Duels, and 'Play' in Saint Domingue," in *New World Orders: Violence, Sanction, and Authority in the Colonial Americas*, John Smolenski and Thomas J. Humphrey, eds. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005): 226-248.

[163] Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Loix et constitutions*, Vol. VI, "Arrêt du Conseil du Cap, qui 1. condamne le nommé Michel, Mulâtre libre, Caboteur, pour avoir lancé contre plusieurs Blancs, assis devant la porte du Sieur Sommereau, horloger au Cap, une pierre qui avoit rompu le barreau d'une chaise, et atteint le Sieur le Roi, Tapissier, duquel coup ledit Sieur Le Roi auroit été renversé, à être attaché à la chaîne du Roi, pour y servir comme forçat l'espace de trois années; Le nommé Jean-Baptiste Firmin Declaré, Nègre se disant libre, pour avoir tenu des propos insolens et menaçans au Sieur Sommereau; et le nommé Jean-Baptiste, Nègre esclave de la nommée Rossignol, pour avoir mal-à-propos frappé le chien du Sieur Joubert, couché près des Blancs assis devant la porte du Sieur Sommereau, et donné lieu par-là au faits qui se sont ensuivis, à être fouettès, l'un et l'autre, dans tous les Lieux et Carrefours accoutumés; et 2. Faisant droit sur les plus amples Conclusions du Procureur-Général du Roi, ordonne que Jean-Baptiste Firmin fera, dans le délai d'un mois, preuve de sa liberté, pendant lequel temps il gardera prison. Du 27 Avril 1784," 492.

insolent and menacing remarks to Sieur Sommereau, in front of whose house the whole affair took place.

In the aftermath of public confrontations, the colonial legal system routinely worked against people of color, enslaved and free.[164] Legal judgments, which were read and posted throughout the city, promulgated the racist logic of the "color line." So did the exemplary punishments of people of color, carried out in public streets and squares.

The public records of case summaries and judgments often identified people of color as the parties responsible for transgressing social norms and inciting violence. After the fight between Castillon, Françoise, and Marie-Anne was broken up, the two *mulatresses* were taken to the city jail--from which Marie-Anne later escaped, thanks to the collusion of an enslaved man imprisoned there and the incompetence of the jailer.[165] In the following months, a number of individuals were charged in connection with the combined altercation and prison break: Cassaignard, the (white) Concierge des Prisons; a certain Fauvel dit Cadet; the *négre* Baptiste, Marie-Anne's conspirator; Jean-Baptiste, another enslaved man in the prison; Marie-Anne herself; Françoise; and Marthe, another free *mulatresse* who was initially suspected of involvement in the fight. *La femme* Castillon, one of the two who began the fight, was not listed among them. Similarly, the summary of the case involving Michel and his companions places all responsibility for the violence on the men of color. If the white men made any response

[164] Ogle, "Natural Movements," 239.
[165] Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Loix et constitutions* Vol. VI, "Arrêt du Conseil du Cap touchant des Mulâtresses insolents," 31.

to this seemingly unprovoked attack (Jean-Baptiste "foolishly" kicked Sieur Joubert's dog) it did not merit the attention of the court.[166]

The strange case of Sieur La Poterie further demonstrates both the potential for cross-racial violence to disrupt the security of whiteness, and the ways that legal proclamations obscured the role of whites as instigators of violence. La Poterie, a white resident of Cap Français, was routinely followed through the streets and sometimes threatened with injury by groups of people of color and children.[167] The police ordinance intended to curb this behavior began with a remonstrance against "the ferocity of the Blacks of this City in pursuing in the streets and doing injury to a Certain White, named La Poterie," calling it "a great affront to the respect due to the quality of White by People of color," but offering no immediate explanation for their actions.[168] The ordinance, interestingly, went on to prohibit "*all* persons, of whatever quality or condition they may be, from injuring, or *causing* to be injured, Sieur La Poterie, and from *causing* children and slaves to follow the said Sieur La Poterie in a group" (emphasis mine).[169] While focusing on the actions of people of color, the ordinance thus leaves space open to suggest a hidden instigator behind those actions.

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[166] Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Loix et constitutions*, Vol. VI, "Arrêt du Conseil du Cap, qui 1. condamne le nommé Michel...," 492.
[167] Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Loix et constitutions*, Vol. VI, "Ordonnance du Juge de Police du Cap, qui défend de continuer à insulter un Particulier. Du 19 Février 1782," 228.
[168] "...l'acharnement des Négres de cette Ville à poursuivre dans les rues et injurier un Particulier Blanc, nommé la Poterie...qui porte la plus grande atteinte au respect dû à la qualité de Blanc par les Gens de couleur," Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Loix et constitutions*, Vol. VI, "Ordonnance du Juge de Police du Cap," 228.
[169] "Nous faisons très-expresses inhibitions et défenses à toutes personnes, de quelque qualité et condition qu'elles soient, d'injurier, faire injurier le sieur la Poterie dans les rues, et de faire attrouper les enfans et les Négres après ledit sieur la Poterie," Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Loix et constitutions*, Vol. VI, "Ordonnance du Juge de Police du Cap," 229. I might be pushing the analysis too far here, but I really wanted to find a way to include this case, because it seems bizarre.

Public punishments could further the effect of summaries and judgments by explicitly framing offenses as violations of the racial order and attempting to symbolically restore it. Sentencing in the affair of Castillon, Françoise, and Marie-Anne was complicated by the latter's escape and a process of appeals involving the jurisdictions of the Conseil Superieur, the Criminal Court, and the Procureur du Roi. In the first version of the sentence, issued on March 15, 1780, Françoise and Marie-Anne were not formally condemned, but only admonished before the Court, and required to make a joint donation of 1,500 *livres* to the Hôpital de la Providence.[170] The final judgment, in June, was notably more severe: the two were to be placed in the stocks in the Place de Clugny during the morning market hours, with a placard in front of them that read: "MULATRESS INSOLENT TOWARDS WHITE WOMEN."[171] Further, they were both banished from the jurisdiction of the court for ten years, and fined three *livres* to the king, in addition to their collective donation to La Providence. Michel and his companions also endured punishments intended to emphasize their racial status. Michel, a free man, was reduced to servitude, attached to the public chain gang for three years as a *forçat*.[172] Both Jean-Baptistes, free black and enslaved, were to be publicly whipped "at all the accustomed places and crossroads." Jean-Baptiste Firmin's

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[170] Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Loix et constitutions* Vol. VI, "Arrêt du Conseil du Cap touchant des Mulâtresses insolents," 32.

[171] "MULATRESSE INSOLENT ENVERS LES FEMMES BLANCHES." The text continues: "ce qui sera exécuté par effigie, en un tableau où lesdites condamnations seront transcrites," so does this mean "in effigy"? That they weren't, themselves, forced to be on public display? Compare to other instances of public punishment--this suggests, possibly, evidence of a gradation among free people of color: their wealth and mixed-race-ness mitigated their punishment in a way that doesn't tend to happen for free blacks (and definitely not for slaves).

[172] Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Loix et constitutions*, Vol. VI, "Arrêt du Conseil du Cap, qui 1. condamne le nommé Michel...," 492.

freedom was also threatened, as he was ordered to produce proof of his liberty within a month, during which time he would be confined in the city prison.

The overwhelming institutional tendency to police and penalize people of color while upholding and rewarding whiteness occasionally broke down. These exceptions were not frequent enough to mitigate the oppressive effects of colonial society for free people of color. On the other hand, for recent migrants who depended heavily on the advantages of whiteness, exceptions to the general rule signaled that whiteness was fundamentally unstable and in need of constant defense.

In addition, the urban police force was fairly ineffectual at actually controlling the behavior of Cap Français's enslaved population. Enslaved Africans and Afro descendants from the city and the surrounding plantations created a rich cultural and social life for themselves. They frequently gathered in large numbers at the central market in the Place de Clugny, or on the outskirts of town at La Fossette or near the Hôpital de la Providence. Moreau de Saint-Méry complained that the--mostly male, mostly African-born--enslaved population of Cap Français "[went] armed with big sticks; rent[ed] rooms; gamble[d]; [held] assemblies; finally violate[d] all the rules, and the policemen [were] tranquil observers of their contraventions."[173] Few in number and poorly paid, the urban police sometimes hesitated to discipline slaves for fear of angering their masters.[174]

Further, when the colonial legal system issued public judgments and punishments for altercations between whites and free people of color, they occasionally

[173] Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Déscription de la partie française*, I:487.
[174] Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Déscription de la partie française*, I:487.

sided with the latter. In the early 1780s, administrative reforms led to limited controls on the ability of individual whites to enact violence against free people of color.[175] Hilliard d'Auberteuil exaggerated when he wrote that "whoever strikes a Mulatto is confined to the forts or military prisons," but the courts did sometimes seek to (slightly) constrain white brutality.[176] In October 1783, Sieur and Dame A..., "Whites and Retailers," were ordered to pay 300 *livres* in civil reparations to F..., a free black woman, for striking her "excessively."[177] Earlier that same year, another white man received a larger fine for his violence against a free man of color. Sieur Chanche, who lived in Cap Français and operated the ferry to l'Acul, injured Charles Maucombre, a free mulatto, so severely that Maucombre nearly lost his eye.[178] The Conseil Supérieur of Cap Français condemned Chanche to pay 3,000 *livres* to Maucombre in damages and denied his appeal to have the sum reduced to 1,000 *livres*.

Public judgments and punishments could also serve as a reminder that despite the rhetoric of the color line, distinctions of rank persisted among whites of different statuses within colonial society. A white carpenter convicted of making "false and

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[175] Hilliard d'Auberteuil, *Considérations*, I:145, suggests that this change does not carry over to white treatment of slaves: "In Saint-Domingue, whoever is White mistreats the Blacks with impunity. Their situation is such that they are slaves of their masters and of the public. When a wrong is done to a slave, the Judges are in the habit of only considering the diminution of his price." / "A Saint-Domingue, quiconque est Blanc maltraite impunément les Noirs. Leur situation est telle, qu'ils sont esclaves de leurs maîtres et du public. Dans le tort que l'on fait à un esclave, les Juges sont dans l'usage de ne considérer que la diminution de son prix."

[176] "quiconque frappe un Mulâtre est mis dans les forts ou prisons militaires..." Hilliard d'Auberteuil, *Considérations*, Vol. II, 74.

[177] Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Loix et constitutions*, Vol. VI, "Arrêt du Conseil du Cap, confirmatif de Sentence du Siège Royal de la même ville, qui condamne les Sieur et Dame A... Blancs et Marchands, à payer 300 liv. de réparations civiles à la nommée F... Négresse libre, pour l'avoir excédée de coups. Du 21 Octobre 1783," 370.

[178] Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Loix et constitutions*, Vol. VI, "Arrêt du Conseil du Cap, qui condamne un Blanc en 3,000 liv. de dommages-intèrêts, pour avoir frappé un Mulâtre libre, de manière à lui faire courir le risque de perdre un oeil. Du 9 Janvier 1783," 295.

calumnious imputations" against a notary in the nearby parish of Trou was required to make a public apology before the court and four witnesses, asking the notary's pardon and acknowledging him as "an Officer with integrity," and in addition to pay him 600 *livres*.[179] Similarly, in early 1781, the manager of a plantation outside the city was forced to make a public apology to the owner of a neighboring estate, for threatening him after a fight between slaves from the two plantations.[180]

The physical, demographic, and institutional structures of Cap Français all worked to defend the colonial white population by imposing racial order. As migrants internalized the value of whiteness, unfavorable legal judgments, uneven policing, and public cross-racial confrontations appeared to them as troubling cracks in the publicly enforced edifice of white supremacy. They learned that whiteness was simultaneously powerful and precarious; a social, cultural, and economic asset to be constantly asserted and defended.

This chapter has argued that migrants from France discovered two overarching frameworks that structured everyday life in Cap Français. To its free white population, Cap Français was a socially and economically dynamic Caribbean port. Its thriving economy, fluid society, and urban sociability also had negative aspects: volatile

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[179] Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Loix et constitutions*, Vol. VI, "Arrêt du Conseil du Cap, qui condamne un Charpentier à déclarer, au Greffe de la Cour, en présence de 4 témoins, qu'il demande pardon à M. B... B... Notaire au Trou, des imputations fausses et calomnieuses qu'il s'est permises contre lui (sous le prétexte d'une surtaxe d'honoraires) et qu'il le reconnoît pour un Officier intègre; en 600 liv. de dommages-intérêts, applicables, du consentement de M. B... B..., à l'Eglise Paroissiale du Trou; l'Arrêt imprimé et affiché, au nombre de 100 Exemplaires," 170.

[180] Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Loix et constitutions*, Vol. VI, "Arrêt du Conseil du Cap, sur une plainte portée par un Habitant, contre un Gérant, pour lui avoir fait des menaces, à la suite d'une rixe entre les Esclaves de deux Habitations. Du 30 Mars 1781," 116.

markets, high mortality rates, and a pervasive sense of rootlessness. To balance in this dynamic world of possibility and precarity, migrants adopted an individualistic, entrepreneurial mentality while also casting wide social and economic nets in the hope of security or even profit.

Cap Français was simultaneously a bastion of imperial power and colonial order. The city was structured to defend the lives and interests of the colonial white population. In consequence, public institutions, legal measures, and social norms all tended to enforce a white supremacist racial order. Migrants learned the significance and operations of whiteness, but also that they needed to actively reinforce their own "white" status.

This chapter takes up and reinterprets Shannon Lee Dawdy's argument that the colonial combination of metropolitan planning and local survival strategies "helped create an environment that encouraged many actors to individually refashion themselves and to collectively invent new institutions."[181] Migrants from France developed social and economic strategies to operate at the intersection of the urban structures of commercial dynamism and racial order. In the following chapters, I will identify and analyze these strategies to illuminate how laboring and middling whites, created and deployed a repertoire of interdependent status claims, adapting the conventions of credit, mastery, and whiteness to secure a social and economic foothold in the urban commercial world of Cap Français.

[181] Dawdy, *Building the Devil's Empire*, 5.

CHAPTER THREE

CREDIT, CONTRACTS, AND RACIALIZED PRACTICES OF TRUST

A month after her arrival in Cap Français in 1778, Madame Sarran, a fashion merchant and dressmaker, was beginning to wish she had never come. "My dear, you should thank those who prevented you from leaving your shop," she wrote to her husband, a cloth merchant in Paris. "Fortunes in this country do not come quickly for people of your status."[182] Of all the difficulties she described--the heat, the insects, the discovery that much of her stock of clothing and goods and been damaged during the sea voyage--she dwelt the longest on the untrustworthiness of the local clientele. "In this colony, the *habitants* are very affable, but one is well warned to mistrust this affability; it is necessary to continually be on one's guard against being tricked," she complained. The residents of Cap Français and the surrounding plains "had no scruples" about demanding credit, which they would then "never repay," and they targeted shopkeepers who were new to the colony and not yet wise to their ways. Madame Sarran found herself on the defensive: "I give no credit; I do not sell as much [as if I did], but I fear to so expose myself to people more subtle than myself." When she got to know the locale, she hoped, she would "be able to conduct business with those whom I know well," but until she could build these connections, "I do not speak of my affairs to anyone, I even distrust myself, so fearful am I of being wronged."

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[182] The National Archives, Kew, Records of the High Court of Admiralty and colonial Vice-Admiralty courts, Intercepted Mails and Papers, HCA 30/280, Letter to Monsieur Sarran, marchand d'etoffes de soye, 6/28/1778,

As Madame Sarran immediately recognized, newcomers to Cap Français needed to cultivate reliable personal credit networks if they hoped to achieve economic and social success. In this chapter, I argue that the credit-based economy of Cap Français represented an adaptation of metropolitan commercial conventions to a racially inflected colonial society. Within the urban marketplace, aspiring artisans and retailers employed customary strategies for assessing potential business partners and negotiating commercial contracts. However, they incorporated colonial conventions of racial status and enslaved "property" into their repertoire of metropolitan practices. This process of adaptation facilitated European migrants' participation in local commerce while simultaneously reinforcing their claims of whiteness.

Eighteenth-century commentators tended to present a very different image of Cap Français's local economy. They described scenes of wild financial speculation; of colonial commerce as a highly individualized gamble that rarely rewarded risk-takers. Michel-René Hilliard d'Auberteuil, writing in the mid-1770s, described Cap Français as a place of upheaval where business schemes, usury, and fraud abounded.[183] Similarly, Pierre-Victor Malouet described a fundamentally unstable economic environment where colonial fortune-seekers "open a boutique on credit, sell at a loss to make their payments on time, and end in bankruptcy."[184]

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[183] Michel-René Hilliard d'Auberteuil, *Considérations sur l'état présent de la colonie française de Saint-Domingue: Ouvrage politique et législatif; présenté au ministre de la marine*, Tome premier (Paris, 1776), 159.

[184] Pierre-Victor Malouet, *Collection de mémoires et correspondances officielles sur l'administration des colonies*, Vol. IV. (Paris: Baudouin, imprimeur de l'institut national des sciences et des arts, 1802), "Essai sur l'administration coloniale," 127.

However, while the plantation commodity trade of Saint-Domingue powered the growth of an Atlantic capitalist economy, credit-based commerce in the local market of Cap Français still involved "capital" in a cultural as well as economic sense. To European migrants, "credit" had several overlapping meanings. It encompassed both economic credit and, as Clare Crowston says, "the informal workings of influence and reputation in politics, social life, religious faith, and cultural production."[185] These understandings of credit did not simply coexist--they were inextricably intertwined. In credit exchanges, cultural capital could be converted into economic capital, and vice versa.[186] When French migrants pursued credit connections to shield themselves from the risks of colonial commerce, they employed social as well as economic strategies to establish trust and earn credit. These social and legal strategies were familiar from the metropole, but with a colonial twist as migrants added whiteness to their repertoire of signs of respectability. Further, local credit exchanges in Cap Français relied fundamentally on the exploitative system of slavery: contracting parties both traded on their cultural status as enslavers and used enslaved Africans and Afro descendants as human repositories of value, as both "objects" of exchange and as surety for contract fulfillment.

This exploration of commercial transactions and credit networks in Cap Français is divided into two parts. I begin by considering how metropolitan practices for assessing creditworthiness--in its moral and social as well as economic dimensions--

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[185] Clare Haru Crowston, *Credit, Fashion, Sex: Economies of Regard in Old Regime France* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013), 1.
[186] Crowston, *Credit, Fashion, Sex*, 13-15.

were adapted to the socially fluid and economically volatile context of Cap Français, and how European migrants could make use of this colonial credit market. The economic instability and weak community ties of Cap Français made familiar metropolitan problem of how to assess creditworthiness both more pressing and more difficult to solve. However, the city was home to several institutions that helped the local community enforce obligations and reduce risk: notaries, two lower courts, and a court of higher appeals. These, coupled with customary practices of community oversight and enforcement, enabled local credit networks to incorporate new and unfamiliar participants. European migrants relied on credit to establish themselves in local commerce: to rent shop space, purchase tools and merchandise and, perhaps most importantly, extract profit from the bodies and the labor of enslaved Africans. Further, because creditworthiness was both determined by and determinative of social reputation, repeated engagement in trust-based commercial transactions worked to solidify migrants' status within the local community.

The second part of the chapter considers how middling and laboring white migrants strategically contracted trust-based commercial agreements to strengthen their connections to the white community of Cap Français. White retailers and artisans were more likely to contract agreements with free people of color when those contracts involved smaller investments, shorter time commitments, and fewer complex provisions. When contracts involved higher commitments of capital, time, and trust, middling and laboring whites preferred to do business with other whites. In economic terms, middling whites and free people of color used credit for the same reasons, and to the same

advantage. In a social sense, middling whites gained something extra. Their credit choices tied them more closely to the established white community, reinforcing their personal claims to whiteness in the process.

The source base for this chapter consists primarily of a sample of 722 notarized contracts, drawn from the records of fifteen different notaries who held offices in Cap Français between 1777 and 1789. These contracts cover several different types of transactions, including sales, loans, rentals, dispute settlements, powers of attorney, and long-term business partnerships. The contracts that describe loans and debt repayment attest to the extension of credit in its most direct form. However, I contend that the other types of contract included here also provide insight into practices of credit and trust. They can be loosely grouped as what I refer to as "trust-based commerce," by which I mean commercial transactions that involve exchanges and obligations extended over a longer period of time than a one-time cash payment.[187] Because of this time factor, these transactions often involved either a pre-established relationship between parties, or a careful assessment of creditworthiness.

Taken together, the two halves of the chapter demonstrate the importance of credit networks and trust-based commercial exchanges, not only for the operation of the local economy, but also as mechanisms that shaped and underpinned the city's socio-racial order. Access to credit enabled migrants from France to gain an economic foothold in urban commerce, and to begin to assert themselves socially as reputable, white, enslavers. Laboring and middling whites leveraged credit relations not just for

[187] Crowston, *Credit, Fashion, Sex*, 14.

economic gain, but also as tools to establish their own whiteness and strengthen their connections to the local white community.

Assessing risks and enforcing contracts in Cap Français

French migrants who sought a social and commercial foothold in Cap Français were well-accustomed to credit transactions. The inhabitants of early modern France lived in the midst of what Annik Pardailhe-Galabrun calls "a tangle of little debts," and Julie Hardwick refers to as "a constellation of credit": two ways of saying that the majority of everyday business occurred through micro-level practices of borrowing and lending.[188] These familiar practices proved especially necessary in cash-strapped Saint-Domingue.[189] Most of these exchanges were not formalized, but were instead recorded and tracked through a variety of informal mechanisms, including oral agreements, paper IOUs, book debt, and privately signed contracts. All of these forms of informal sales credit relied on repeat transactions, and thus had a social as well as economic component, as they depended on the establishment of a certain level of trust between parties. Repeated transactions did not only rely on interpersonal trust, but could also

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[188] Annik Pardailhé-Galabrun, *The Birth of Intimacy: Privacy and Domestic Life in Early Modern Paris* (Oxford: Polity, 1991), xii; Julie Hardwick, *Family Business: Litigation and the Political Economies of Daily Life in Early Modern France* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 130. Also see: Laurence Fontaine, *The Moral Economy: Poverty, Credit, and Trust in Early Modern Europe*; Clare Crowston, *Credit, Fashion, Sex*; Natacha Coquery, *Tenir boutique*. The practical factors that explain the prevalence of micro-credit in metropolitan France also generally applied in Saint-Domingue. For a preliminary consideration of these factors, see: Laurence Fontaine, "The Exchange of Second-Hand Goods between Survival Strategies and 'Business' in Eighteenth-Century Paris," in *Alternative Exchanges: Second-Hand Circulations from the Sixteenth Century to the Present*, ed. Laurence Fontaine (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008). In particular, Fontaine notes the lack of financial institutions and shortage of circulating legal tender in Old Regime France.

[189] Robert Richard, "A propos de Saint-Domingue: la monnaie dans l'économie coloniale (1674-1803)," *Revue d'histoire des colonies* 41 (1954), finds an endemic shortage of coin in Saint-Domingue, especially during wartime: the most common coins in circulation were Spanish pieces, obtained through contraband.

create it over time, as social bonds formed through long-term extensions of credit and a pattern of good-faith exchanges.[190]

In both colony and metropole, as individuals engaged in all of these everyday practices of credit and exchange, they confronted one central problem: how to assess the trustworthiness of potential economic partners, under conditions of information asymmetry. Participants in Old Regime markets primarily turned to social mechanisms of reputation and reciprocity, both built over time and grounded in community relationships, to address this problem. Engagement in commercial exchanges, then, required a certain level of credit and trust, which were held by individuals, but generated through overlapping and ongoing social relations.[191] However, for artisans and retailers new to the city, determining the economic trustworthiness of their neighbors in Cap Français--and being accepted as creditworthy in return--involved a different set of pressures and considerations than it did in urban neighborhoods and small towns in France. Entrepreneurial European migrants made decisions about credit partnerships in a local context characterized by market volatility, social fluidity, and high risk-taking in pursuit of the fleeting possibility of great economic reward.

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[190] Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan; New York: St Martin's, 1998), 124; Avner Offer, "Between the gift and the market: the economy of regard," *Economic History Review* L3 (1997), 451; Amalia D. Kessler, *A Revolution in Commerce: The Parisian Merchant Court and the Rise of Commercial Society in Eighteenth-Century France* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 59-61.

[191] There is a robust secondary literature that explores the ways in which early modern identity and reputation was embedded in community and professional networks. Among my most immediate references here: Clare Haru Crowston, *Credit, Fashion, Sex,* 128; Vincent Denis, *Une histoire de l'identité: France, 1715-1815*. (Paris: Champ Vallon, 2008), 411; For credit access as dependent on familiarity: Hardwick, *Family Business*, 170; Arlette Farge, *Fragile Lives: Violence, Power, and Solidarity in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 20; David Garrioch, *The Making of Revolutionary Paris* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Londres: University of California Press, 2014), 34, 93.

Because the local economy was oriented to the Atlantic trade in plantation commodities, it shared the same broad dynamics of volatility, indebtedness, and a mentality that encouraged high risk for the possibility of correspondingly high rewards.[192] In consequence, urban retailers and creditors were subject to the same economic shifts and downturns that affected the fortunes of their planter clientele. As Dominguan sugar and coffee claimed a greater market share in the last decades of the Old Regime, the local retail market in Le Cap similarly thrived. At the same time, all of the structural and episodic challenges that affected the fortunes of planters--bad harvests, fluctuating commodity prices, trade disruptions caused by weather or war--also impacted the urban service economy that relied on their patronage.[193] This potential for recurring crises made individual creditworthiness difficult to predict.

In addition to factors of market volatility and economic risk-taking, which made credit relationships as necessary as they were difficult to navigate, high levels of mobility and social fluidity exacerbated the challenges of assessing potential credit partners in Saint-Domingue. The intensification of voluntary Atlantic migration to Saint-Domingue after the Seven Years' War, combined with high rates of mortality and return to France, meant that participants in the credit market in Cap Français faced informational challenges similar to that of the vastly larger, anonymized private credit market of Paris.[194] In the smaller, more closed credit networks of rural France, most

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[192] Paul Cheney, *Cul de Sac: Patrimony, Capitalism, and Slavery in French Saint-Domingue* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), to expand on this.
[193] For planter debt and market fluctuations, see Cheney, *Cul de Sac*, 46.
[194] Philip T. Hoffman, Gilles Postel-Vinay and Jean-Laurent Rosenthal, "What do Notaries do? Overcoming Asymmetric Information in Financial Markets: The Case of Paris, 1751," *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics (JITE) / Zeitschrift für die gesamte Staatswissenschaft*, Vol. 154, No. 3 (September 1998), 505.

participants knew each other personally. Individuals often formed economic partnerships primarily on the basis of affective ties, or with reference to community reputations and norms of reciprocity.[195] Laurence Fontaine observes that peasants sought and extended credit within concentric circles of familiarity, turning first to family members, then to local and regional notables, and only as a last resort to foreigners or social outsiders.[196]

Despite all of these challenges, for European migrants attempting to gain an economic and social foothold in Cap Français, access to the local credit market was crucial. Those who arrived in the colony hoping to make their fortune sought to mobilize as much capital as possible, as quickly as possible, in order to invest in rural real estate. Even a more modest start, in an urban commercial venture, required a substantial initial investment. In the absence of personal fortunes to draw upon, the most effective way to do so was through trust-dependent bilateral partnerships or short-term debt agreements.[197]

The most ubiquitous and significant of these initial investments was in enslaved labor. Colonial observer Alexandre Wimpffen claimed that aspiring white slaveowners typically made an initial payment of around one-third of the value affixed upon their human "property" at the time of purchase, with the rest to be paid in scheduled

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[195] Elise Dermineur, "Trust, Norms of Cooperation, and the Rural Credit Market in Eighteenth-Century France," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* XLV: 4 (Spring 2015): 485-506.
[196] Laurence Fontaine, "Antonio and Shylock: credit and trust in France, c. 1680- c. 1780," *Economic History Review*, LIV, 1 (2001), 49.
[197] For business associations as a mechanism for mobilizing capital: Kessler *Revolution in Commerce*, 148. For social relationships and capital mobilization: Clifford Geertz, "The Rotating Credit Association: A 'Middle Rung' in Development," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* Vol. 10, No. 3 (April 1962): 241-263; Dermineur, "Trust, Norms of Cooperation, and the Rural Credit Market"; Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation*; Crowston, *Credit, Fashion, Sex*; Fontaine, "Antonio and Shylock."

installments.[198] Calculating slaveowners predicted a quick return on their investment. In coldly economic terms: an enslaved African new to the colony was typically assigned a value of 1,800 to 2,000 *livres de Saint-Domingue*.[199] A slaveowner who made an initial payment of between 600 and 700 *livres* could then turn around and rent out their new "property" for 200 to 300 *livres* a month--a sum that Dominique Rogers estimates would cover one half to one third of the minimum monthly living expenses for free urban residents.[200] Of course, the trade and exchange of human beings was never neatly reducible to economics. Enslaved people could and did thwart these expectations of profit, whether by refusing to work or by running away. Claiming ownership of enslaved laborers allowed European-born entrepreneurs to accumulate social as well as economic capital. It was the first step toward recognition as a *propriétaire*, someone with a proprietary stake in colonial society.[201] Because assessments of creditworthiness involved considerations of status and reputation, European migrants who established themselves--on credit--as slaveowners thereby improved their chances of being assessed as creditworthy by the local community, with enslaved Africans as both guarantors and victims of the entire transaction.

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[198] King, *Blue Coat or Powdered Wig*, 150.
[199] A note on transaction values: All prices for transactions that took place in Saint-Domingue are listed in *livres de Saint-Domingue* rather than *livres de France*. A 1749 edict established the colonial *livre* at 150% the value of the metropolitan *livre tournois* (Richard, "La monnaie dans l'économie coloniale," 28). As a way to make the scale of these transactions more concrete, some price comparisons: McClellan, *Colonialism and Science*, 24, estimates that an artisan made an average yearly salary of 300 *livres*; Roche, *The Culture of Clothing*, 358, estimates the cost of a new coat of good broadcloth at 50-70 *livres*. Rogers and King, "Housekeepers, Merchants, Rentières," 375, give the following notes on the Dominguan income structure at the end of the eighteenth century: 10,000+ *livres*/year: affluent; 6,000-10,000 *livres:* "on the threshold of prosperity."
[200] Rogers, "Les libres de couleur," 108.
[201] Rogers, "Les libres de couleur," 121.

So, how did fortune-seeking artisans and retailers evaluate prospective business partners, and what encouraged the local commercial community to trust them in turn? They accomplished both of these objectives by appealing to the same conventions of exchange and reciprocity that they would have leveraged in the metropole. While the credit marketplace of Cap Français was distinctive due to its climate of high risk and social fluidity, it was never entirely anonymous or impersonal, and the fundamental metropolitan norms, needs, and mechanisms for establishing credit and trust still applied. As Paul Cheney argues, "the peopling and development of Saint-Domingue were an extension of the social collaborations and political structures characteristic of Old Regime France."[202] To return to an earlier example: by the time Madame Sarran wrote to her husband, she was already beginning to use conventions of reciprocity to find her feet in the shifting commercial world of Cap Français. She had managed to sell an embroidered dress from her *pacotille* for 375 colonial *livres*, which she considered "a fairly good sale," especially considering that the dress had been damaged in the Atlantic crossing.[203] At first, she had thought she would have to write the dress off as a loss, as "it had already circulated in le Cap that the dress was damaged." Fortunately, she managed to make an agreement with a local tailor: "I told him that it had cost me 250 *livres de France*, that I wanted only to get my money back, that if he could make it worth 400, that there would be 25 in it for him." Four days later, the tailor had used his local

[202] Cheney, *Cul de Sac*, 8. Cheney makes this point mostly with reference to the colonial elite, particularly norms of patrimony.
[203] HCA 30/280, Letter to Monsieur Sarran, 6/28/1778.

information networks to find a suitable buyer, and Sarran kept her end of the bargain, to their mutual satisfaction.

Wary participants in the local credit economy could also contract formal, notarized agreements as a mechanism to encourage their business partners to fulfill their obligations. Notarized contracts, which held parties to fixed, written terms according to civil-court standards of proof, could compensate for the mutual mistrust that threatened to undermine commercial cooperation and long-term partnership formation.[204] Creditors, debtors, and business associates could strategically combine notarized agreements with more informal arrangements, when they felt it necessary. The text of notarized commercial transactions sometimes attests to the world of informal agreements that surrounded them, as when contracting parties referenced a preceding, privately signed agreement, or appeared as representatives for absent family members or business partners.

Urban notaries could also serve as useful sources of information about potential business associates. In the socially fluid setting of Cap Français, individuals could rarely refer to established family ties or community reputations when determining the creditworthiness of potential business partners. Urban credit markets in France confronted the same problem. As these markets grew larger and more complex notaries often mitigated market anonymity by serving as intermediaries to match prospective borrowers with lenders.[205] Notaries filled this role effectively because they had access to years' worth of notarial records, and often an established network of clients, which could

[204] Kessler, *Revolution in Commerce*, 61-62.
[205] Hoffman, Postel-Vinay, and Rosenthal, "What do Notaries do?"

be inherited with notarial *études* over generations.[206] In this dual role as producers of legally binding documents and sources of personal information about clients, the notaries of Cap Français provided reassurances that facilitated the incorporation of unfamiliar individuals into local credit networks.

Finally, notaries and notarized contracts gave European-born migrants an opportunity to claim membership in the local white community. Notarized contracts were not private or confidential, but potentially public-facing legal instruments, admissible as evidence in court. As part of their services, notaries worked with their clients to craft the documentary image that would cast the contracting parties in the best light possible.[207] One aspect of this image-crafting was the identifying information listed for each individual named in the contract. The passage of legislation in 1773 requiring that all free people of color be marked as such in all public records, including notarized contracts, made the notary's office a place to claim not only respectability, but racial identity. Notaries in Cap Français, acting in the interests of their free colored clients, did not consistently follow these new regulations.[208] Even so, when European migrants were recorded in notarial registers with the title of "Sieur" or "Dame," unmarked by any racial terminology, they inscribed themselves implicitly as members of the city's white community.

To lend further assurance to credit relations in a context of uncertainty about reputation and reciprocity, residents of Cap Français could also turn to mechanisms of

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[206] Philip T. Hoffman, Gilles Postel-Vinay and Jean-Laurent Rosenthal, "Private Credit Markets in Paris, 1690-1840," *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 52, No. 2 (June 1992), 295.
[207] Rogers, "Les libres de couleur," 303.
[208] Rogers, "Les libres de couleur," 296.

legal enforcement. In metropolitan credit markets both large and small, over the course of the eighteenth century a steadily increasing number of individuals relied on notarized contracts and the possibility of recourse to the justice system to ensure good faith from their economic partners.[209] Likewise, artisans and retailers in Cap Français sometimes turned to the court system to attempt to enforce the terms of agreement.[210] In his 1789 *Réforme judiciaire à Saint-Domingue*, Guillaume-Pierre-François de La Mardelle argued that the smooth operation of the heavily debt-based Dominguan economy depended on an accessible court system that could swiftly produce judgments and handle appeals:

> In a maritime establishment like ours, where the merchant only has disputes with cultivators and manufacturers, workers or small-scale debtors to whom he sells his merchandise, personal disputes, nearly always [consulaires], are only a matter of simple contestation and do not require extensive legal knowledge, only integrity and good sense to be well-judged.[211]

The dispute between Marguerite Burgo, a free black woman, and the innkeeper Jacques Aubin demonstrates how effective such legal enforcement could be. The two parties drew up a notarized contract on January 6, 1779, in which Aubin agreed to pay off an earlier debt to Burgo, in the form of either "a *négritte* or a sum of 1,400 *livres*."[212] When Aubin failed to fulfill his obligation, Burgo took the matter to the Sénéchaussée, one of the two lower courts of Cap Français, which delivered a sentence ordering him to

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[209] Dermineur, "Trust, Norms of Cooperation, and the Rural Credit Market," 502-506.
[210] For norms of legality and cooperation in Saint-Domingue: Cheney, *Cul de Sac*, 58.
[211] "[D]ans un établissement maritime comme le nôtre, où le commerçant n'a de discussions qu'avec un cultivateur manufacturier, qu'avec des ouvriers ou de petits débitans, à qui il livre ses marchandises, les causes personnelles, presque toutes consulaires, n'offrent que des contestations simples, qui n'exigeant pas de grandes connoissances en droit, n'ont, en quelque sorte, besoin que d'intégrité & de bon sens, pour être bien jugées." Guillaume-Pierre-François de La Mardelle, *Éloge funèbre du comte d'Ennery et Réforme judiciaire à Saint-Domingue* (Port-au-Prince: Mozard, 1789), 57.
[212] Archives nationales d'outre-mer (ANOM), Notariat de Saint-Domingue (Notariat de Saint-Domingue) 1454, 1/12/1781.

pay the agreed-upon sum, along with all interest and court expenses.[213] Aubin instead appealed to the higher court of the Conseil supérieur, and still had not made payment by January 12, 1781, when the two settled the issue privately by drawing up and notarizing new terms for Aubin's debt payment (which had grown to include the not-insignificant sum of 265 *livres* in court expenses).

Artisans and retailers in Cap Français were informed users of the court system, willing to take their cases strategically to different jurisdictions according to which seemed to promise the most favorable outcome.[214] In April of 1778, Jean Tanazac, a local retailer, consigned a packet of goods to a Sieur Daniel, captain of a regional trading vessel, with the understanding that Daniel would take the merchandise to Charleston for sale.[215] Tanazac, "receiving knowledge from people who were in Charleston when his cargo was sold, that Captain Daniel sold the packet to great advantage," went to Daniel's house several times to obtain his share of the profits, but Daniel, "under specious pretexts," sent him away empty-handed. When Tanazac learned that Daniel was planning to leave on another voyage without paying him, he went to the Amirauté, the other lower court of Cap Français, which had jurisdiction over

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[213] For structure of court system in Saint-Domingue: Gene E. Ogle, "Policing Saint Domingue: Race, Violence, and Honor in an Old Regime Colony" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2003).171-178. In Cap Français, all commercial disputes went through this civil court system, while in Paris or other metropolitan trade centers they would likely have fallen under the jurisdiction of specialized commercial courts. Kessler, *Revolution in Commerce*, 62, explains that these commercial courts were often willing to accept privately signed agreements, or even testimony about oral contracts, while civil courts accepted only notarized documents as "full proof". This difference in evidentiary standards suggests a reason, apart from trust considerations, that contracting parties in Cap Français might have chosen notarized over informal agreements.

[214] For forum shopping, see: Lauren Benton, "Legal Spaces of Empire: Piracy and the Origins of Ocean Regionalism," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* Vol. 47, No. 4 (October 2005): 700-724, 720-721.

[215] ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1451, 5/12/1779.

civil disputes involving shipping. The admiralty court ordered Daniel to deliver payment for the merchandise in question, but before the sentence could be enforced, Daniel had taken off again for the North American coast. Tanazac, "assuming that the said captain Daniel was trying to elude him, and maybe even appropriate the proceeds of the sale," gave power of attorney to a Sieur Vergne, who was preparing to travel to Philadelphia, to take Daniel to court on his behalf, in whatever jurisdiction he found him.

While those involved in trust-based commerce in Cap Français could use the courts to exert pressure on recalcitrant associates, they also appealed to persistent communal and reputational norms. The parties involved in commercial disputes often employed a combination of formal court proceedings and community-based means of enforcement to regulate commercial behavior.[216] In July 1776, the gunsmith Jean Baptiste Richard Cassaignard, and another local retailer, Joseph Dieulouard were in the middle of court proceedings related to the terms of dissolution of their former business partnership.[217] While they were waiting for the ruling of the Conseil supérieur on Dieulouard's appeal, the two parties, "being reconciled by their mutual friends," chose four local merchants as arbiters and drew up a mutually-agreed account of their unresolved business in both America and Europe. Having done so, they recognized the potential "embarrassment" and difficulties that a court-ordered division of the business would entail, and so, "in agreement with the mutual friends of theirs who were present," made a private arrangement for Cassaignard to take over the business.

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[216] For local community as enforcer of custom: David Garrioch, *Making of Revolutionary Paris*, 34.
[217] ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 405, 8/31/1777.

The dissolution of the complex business ties contracted between Jean Baptiste Besse and his wife Marie Reine Brard, on one side, and Paul and Colombe Brard (likely Marie Reine's siblings) on the other, also moved between the court system and informal arbitration. The four occasionally engaged in joint commerce, by verbal agreement and later under a notarized partnership contract, until July 1776, when they decided to end their association.[218] In November, they deposited a private agreement with a local notary, in which Paul and Colombe acknowledged that they owed "a certain sum" to Marie Reine and her husband, which they promised to pay within two years. In return, husband and wife agreed to pay the partnership's outstanding debts and liquidate its inventory. When two years had passed and the Brards had still failed to pay, the Besses brought them before the Sénéchaussée, "which threw the parties into a very drawn-out case." Finally, in August 1779, the court ordered Paul and Colombe to pay 18,528 *livres* plus interest, a sentence which they promptly appealed. At this point, "mutual friends hurried to counsel the parties about their respective interests." As a result, the parties "were reconciled, and after having reflected on their dispute," returned to the notary's office to draw up one final compromise agreement.

Notarized contracts for business partnerships, or *sociétés*, explicitly recognized this choice between court and community enforcement, and reflected a preference for the latter. Nearly all business partnership contracts contained provisions requiring partners to go through a process of arbitration before turning to the courts to resolve disputes. The business partnership between retailers Laurent Desfis and Louis Pierre

[218] ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1451, 11/26/1779.

Philippe Lemaitre is typical in its stipulation that in the event of any disagreement between the partners, "they agree and are reciprocally obliged to submit the decision to the arbitration of mutual friends, and to regard their judgment as having the same weight as that of a sovereign court."[219] To give the provision further weight, neither party could proceed to judicial formalities without first paying the other a penalty of 500 *livres*. The recurrent preference for arbitration in business contracts testifies, on two levels, to the importance of the social ties that undergirded commercial agreements. First, arbitration offered a way of resolving difficulties while potentially preserving social relationships, as opposed to the more public, polarizing confrontation of court proceedings. Second, arbitration presumed that other members of the community would be better informed about the individuals and circumstances involved in a dispute, and thus better equipped to resolve it, than court officials at a greater remove from the situation.[220]

Economic and social success, for ambitious urban whites, depended on their ability to maintain their position in a complex web of credit and debt relations, within which any individual failure to fulfill obligations radiated outward to have potentially far-reaching effects. When retailer Antoine Henriques filed for bankruptcy in 1781, citing "the indiscreet credit he gave in the view of augmenting his commerce, and the losses he encountered in Saint Eustache," he submitted a statement of his affairs to the notary Mouttet which enumerated outstanding debts to 23 separate creditors. These included several merchant houses, both French and Spanish, a planter from Quartier Morin, and

[219] ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1166, 4/17/1782.
[220] Kessler, *Revolution in Commerce*, 70-71.

a handful of local retailers, both men and women.[221] Retailers and artisans were simultaneously creditors and debtors, and relied on the payments owed them to make the payments they owed. Pierre Delibessart, in debt for 5,409 *livres* to merchants Rogé and Dupé, promised them a share of rents from his urban real estate holdings. These amounted to 3,000 *livres* to be collected over the course of a year from the hatmaker Lemaire, who rented two rooms on the rue d'Anjou, and two monthly payments of 99 *livres*, from two other tenants who each occupied a single room of the same house.[222]

In France and in Saint-Domingue, credit transactions always entailed a certain amount of risk. Would-be participants in credit exchanges assessed all of the information at their disposal to predict which debtor might default, or which business venture might collapse. Even with the additional safeguards provided by notaries, courts, and arbitration procedures, credit relationships remained precarious. In the urban marketplace of Cap Français, French migrants relied on relations of credit, however tenuous, to establish themselves as white retailers and artisans. In addition, because economic and social capital were so closely entwined, the social status of whiteness was itself precarious, contingent on migrants' economic successes or failures.

Patterns of racial solidarity in notarized contracts

Middling and laboring whites also reinforced their claim to whiteness by making strategic choices about credit partners. They willingly made low-risk, low-commitment

[221] ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1167, 8/31/1786.
[222] ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1167, 7/12/1784.

contracts with free people of color, but overwhelmingly chose white partners for contracts that required a greater extension of resources and trust. Through this racially inflected pattern of partner choice, white retailers and artisans strengthened their social and economic ties to the established white community.

Much of what we know about how racial categorization inflected credit practices in Saint-Domingue comes from scholarly work focused on free people of color. Dominique Rogers, who has done the most extensive work on the subject, argues that whites and free people of color had equal access to credit and regularly contracted business across racial "lines." To Rogers, these practices indicate a broad "normalization of relations" between urban whites and free people of color by the end of the Old Regime.[223] Jennifer Palmer likewise emphasizes cross-racial linkages in the marketplace and asserts that economic ambition outweighed racial concerns in urban commerce.[224]

The credit practices of middling and laboring whites reveal a different pattern, one that adds nuance to Rogers's and Palmer's interpretations. In a sample of 722 notarized contracts, only 93, or 13%, clearly connected individuals across racial lines.[225] Urban whites contracted trust-based agreements with free people of color for business that required lower commitment of resources and time, or that included built-in guarantees to reinforce obligations. For commercial contracts that were more difficult to

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[223] Dominique Rogers, "On the Road to Citizenship: The Complex Route to Integration of the Free People of Color in the Two Capitals of Saint-Domingue," in *The World of the Haitian Revolution*, ed. David Patrick Geggus and Norman Fiering (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009), 72-73.
[224] Jennifer Palmer, *Intimate Bonds: Family and Slavery in the French Atlantic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 117-118.
[225] For more detail about this sample, see Appendix B.

enforce, or which involved high initial investments and complex provisions, middling and laboring whites turned almost exclusively to white partners. This pattern indicates wealth never entirely superseded race in the urban credit market. Whites privileged other whites when they made trust assessments of potential business partners. In addition, laboring and middling whites strategically contracted business in ways that tied them more closely to the existing white community and solidified their own white status. In this section, I will compare the trust and obligation requirements of several types of commercial contract to show how racial identities shaped contractual practices.

White artisans and retailers often appeared before the notaries of Cap Français to formalize sales, whether of moveable property, enslaved persons, or real estate. Nine of 139 sale contracts, or roughly 19%, were cross-racial. Most of these transactions connected parties locally, but some enacted broader ties between retailers in Cap Français and associates or family members around the Caribbean or in France. Notarized sales typically represented more substantial capital commitments than the everyday provisioning exchanges or purchases of luxury goods that also took place in the city, as they ranged in value from several hundred *livres* to tens of thousands, for the purchase of a parcel of rural land. The majority of sales involved sums of between 1,000 and 4,000 *livres*. This range takes on significance given the average price of a *bossale* slave, 1,800 to 2,000 *livres*, and indeed the majority of contracts involved the selling and buying of one or two enslaved persons.[226] Sales encompassed a sufficient variety of goods and prices that no single model of transaction emerges as

[226] Rogers, "Les libres de couleur," 103.

representative. However, when Anne Bouteiller, a retailer's wife, sold a young Congo woman, Desirée, to master cooper Antoine Rocque for 2,500 *livres*, the two carried out an exchange that could be considered typical.[227]

Sales contracts, which took the form of a one-time exchange of property for payment, involved a limited obligation between parties, and thus demanded a less extensive trust relationship than other forms of commercial agreement. Despite the relatively large sums involved, most notarized sale contracts specified that the buyer had either completed payment before buyer and seller met to draw up the contract, or that they paid in the presence of the notary, before signing. However, by capturing the exchange at its moment of completion, the form of the notarial document often obscures a preceding series of partial payments and exchanges.[228] Giovanni Levi, studying records of land sales in the seventeenth-century Piedmont, discovered that recorded prices did not only reflect the value of the property being sold, but varied according to preexisting social ties between buyer and seller, attesting to ongoing relations of family reciprocity that supplemented the monetary exchange at time of sale. Likewise, in the sales records in Cap Français, details of a more complicated process of payment sometimes emerge, through which sales transactions were extended over longer periods of time. For example, when innkeeper Pierre Lafitte bought a bed, bureau, and chairs for 900 *livres*, he only paid 300 at the notary's office.[229] For the remaining 600, he

[227] ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 132, 1/10/1782.
[228] Giovanni Levi, *Inheriting Power: The Story of an Exorcist* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 87-93.
[229] ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1546, 5/13/1778.

gave the seller, M François Behaget, a quittance for 3 months' lodging at the cost of 200 *livres* per month.

The line between sales and short-term loans could blur, as payments sometimes extended beyond the time of sale. Pierre Jean, a tinsmith, claimed ownership of an Arada woman known as Elizabeth, and "a little mulatto, her son," in exchange for 2,400 *livres*.[230] When he and navigator Jean Baptiste Brioque formalized the sale, he had paid 1,800, and offered to pay the remaining 600 either in cash, or by reducing by 600 *livres* the amount of rent that Brioque owed him for an apartment that he occupied. Two weeks later, Brioque chose to take the rent discount. Payment over time in installments was more common in real estate sales, particularly high-value purchases of rural land. When former carpenter François Joseph Xavier Vorbes, fulfilled the colonial dream of landownership, he purchased 30 *carreaux* of a coffee plantation in Limonade for three bills of exchange, each for 7,333 *livres*, payable successively in six months, one year, and eighteen months.[231]

Through such drawn-out sales exchanges, urban entrepreneurs formed credit relationships that cut across the colonial social lines of wealth and race. White artisans and retailers sold to and bought from *habitants*, wholesale merchants, and government employees, nearly as often as they contracted lateral exchanges with their commercial peers. In addition, limited trust requirements made sales contracts easily extensible across racial lines.

[230] ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 405, 3/14/1778.
[231] ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1522, 11/8/1786.

Sales that linked laboring and middling whites with free people of color did not perceptibly differ from those between whites with respect to value or terms of sale. They commonly involved the sale or one or two enslaved people. Typical transactions include the sale by Rosalie Berton, a free black woman, to retailer Ignace Boulon, of 20-year-old Celeste for 1,200 *livres*, or that of retailer Etienne Gerard to free blacks Pierre Antoine and Jean Baptiste Petit, of enslaved creole Jean Louis for 4,000.[232] As in sales between whites, payments could be extended both before and after the contract date. Antoine and Petit paid 3,000 *livres* in advance and the remaining thousand when they met Gerard at the notary's office. Free people of color sometimes dictated the terms of sale. When cafe owner Antoine Curet bought an enslaved man from free black roofer Jacques Boé, he paid 420 of 2,000 *livres* at the time of sale, promising to pay the remaining 1,580 within three months.[233] Boé only agreed to the sale with a provision of *remeré*, in which he maintained the right to pay back the 420 *livres* and reclaim his property at any time during those three months.

Like sale contracts, short-term loans and rental agreements extended over a limited time, allowed for a relatively small initial commitment of resources, and had clearly enforceable terms. Similarly, whites seemed willing to contract these agreements with free people of color: 33 of 197 debt and rental contracts (around 17%) crossed racial lines. The parties who made these contracts did so in full awareness that written promises and communal norms would not always be sufficient to compel debtors or

[232] ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1450, 6/30/1778; ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1455, 6/...]1782.
[233] ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1165, 12/31/1780.

renters to fulfill their obligations. For additional assurance, contracts typically incorporated enforcement mechanisms and incentives to compliance that bolstered fragile community bonds of trust. Such safeguards, along with the limited mutual obligations that these types of contract required, reassured wary creditors, landlords, and enslavers who engaged in business with individuals at the edges of their networks of affinity and trust.

Some sales and short-term loan contracts included interest payments as a form of guarantee. Short-term loans, or *obligations*, were one of three forms of legal debt instrument, alongside longer-term *rentes*, which took the form of either lifetime or perpetual annuities. These latter had fixed legal limits for interest, which shifted over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but tended to remain around 5%, in order to avoid usury. By contrast, *obligations* could not have interest provisions written into the contract itself, but studies of debt relations in early modern France have found that they often included unwritten interest expectations at levels higher than the legal limits for longer-term loans.[234]

Rental contracts carried additional obligations beyond regular payment, as renters were responsible for the upkeep of their temporary property, both the rooms they occupied and the enslaved people to whom they laid temporary claim. An apartment rental contract drawn up between retailers Michel Espanet and Antoine Leonard includes a representative list of terms: Leonard agreed to make any necessary small repairs to the property, to make arrangements in the event that large repairs were

[234] Hoffman, Postel-Vinay, and Rosenthal, "Private Credit Markets," 296.

needed, and to "satisfaire aux charges de ville et de police."[235] When retailer Jean Henry Coupry de Valpré rented two slaves, Pierre Louis and Madeleine, as household servants and marketers, he took responsibility to feed, clothe, and provide medical treatment for them, "in health as well as in sickness."[236]

Rental contracts also incorporated incentives for compliance. Real estate rental agreements often include a collateral clause in which renters promised to furnish their lodgings with "furniture, merchandise, and effects sufficient for security of the lease."[237] Whites who rented the labor of enslaved workers typically agreed to pay back the slave's estimated value in the event of their death or marronnage during the rental term.[238] Renters who voluntarily fulfilled their contractual obligations could also receive positive enforcement, as they developed trust relationships with owners who were willing to renew the terms of their lease. Tailor Louis Charles Meteyer and his wife Catherine rented the labor of Rosalie, a young Congo woman, for a year beginning in August 1780. The following August, the Meteyers and Rosalie's owner, René Jollet, returned to the notary and extended their lease under the same terms.[239] When retailer Marie Anne Folliard Duchesne signed a three-year lease for a boutique and a room in a house on the Place Notre Dame, the notary made a notation that Duchesne was familiar

[235] ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 542, 10/11/1783.
[236] ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1550, 9/1/1781.
[237] ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 542, 6/11/1783; ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1165, 3/4/1781; ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1165, 10/8/1781.
[238] ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1550, 9/1/1781.
[239] ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1453, 8/31/1780; ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1454, 1781.

with the apartment because she had already lived there for some time--a remark that appears in a number of other property leases.[240]

Finally, creditors typically incorporated collateral claims into loan agreements as a hedge against uncertainty. Most often, this took the form of a general claim on all of a debtor's assets, phrased formulaically as "all his present and future possessions."[241] Creditors occasionally required more specific collateral, as when Jean Patin, a gardener and former soldier, arranged for a local *habitant* to pay for his release from military service. Patin promised gradual payment, in the form of a fixed share of his monthly wages, and meanwhile handed over his official discharge papers as security.[242]

The language of the general collateral claim makes it impossible to determine with any certainty what a defaulting debtor would actually forfeit. However, for all free colonial creditors and debtors, enslaved people likely represented the most obvious choice for collateral, as a form of "property" which nearly all free residents of Cap Français could claim. The slave regime thus underpinned and guaranteed the smooth operation of the urban credit economy. When debtors failed to fulfill their contractual obligations, their economic affairs might be thrown into disarray; their social credit might be diminished; but the ones to feel the consequences most directly would be the enslaved individuals who had been used as collateral, who were forced to reconfigure their lives under the authority of a new master.

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[240] ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 782, 3/8/1777; ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1450, 11/24/1778; ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1547, 9/17/1778, for examples.
[241] ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 405, 10/29/1778; ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 782, 1/16/1777; ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1453, 11/23/1780, among others.
[242] ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1521, 6/15/1783.

Because of the limits and protections built into loans and rentals, laboring and middling whites were willing to extend them across racial lines. In these contracts, free people of color acted as creditors and property owners, as when *quarteron libre* Alexis Pironneau rented part of a house at the corner of rues Taranne and Espagnolle to marchand graissier Gabriel Desaubies at a rate of 800 *livres* per year for three years.[243] They also appeared as debtors or renters, as when *negresse libre* Angelique borrowed 264 *livres* from retailer Louis Rouchas and promised to pay him back within a month.[244] In all cases, loans and rental agreements contracted between whites and free people of color invoked the same terms and obligations as those that urban whites negotiated with each other.

Sales, short-term debts, and rental contracts were all contract types in which parties negotiated relatively limited and enforceable mutual obligations. These qualities made them flexible instruments for connecting business partners who were not otherwise linked by strong ties of familiarity, trust, or affinity. Middling and laboring whites were thus willing to contract these forms of business with free people of color.

However, when negotiating contracts for enterprises that involved higher complexity, greater risk, and fewer built-in terms of enforcement white retailers and artisans showed a marked preference for other whites as partners. When formalizing

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[243] ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1165, 10/27/1781. This reflects the role of free people of color as owners of urban real estate property: Trevor Burnard and John Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine: Atlantic Capitalism in French Saint-Domingue and British Jamaica* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 63, estimate that in 1775, free people of color represented 10 percent of the city's population and owned 16 percent of its houses. Also, see Paul Butel, "Le modèle urbain à Saint-Domingue au XVIIIe siècle," 149. The rental value of Pironneau's property was slightly above the average of 798 *livres* per year for property owned by free men of color.
[244] ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1167, 9/11/1784.

business partnerships or granting powers of attorney, whites chose other whites in 146 out of 153 cases, or 95% of the time. These more involved contracts necessitated a higher degree of trust between parties. The racialized pattern of partner choice suggests that whites had incorporated whiteness, as a mark of respectability, into their practices of partner assessment. Further, the strategic choice of white business partners created new social and economic links that integrated middling and laboring whites more closely into the local white community.

We can see this process in action by looking at more complex commercial contracts. Business associations, or *sociétés*, and powers of attorney, or *procurations*, both required a high degree of trust, as they combined a complex set of mutual obligations with limited powers of oversight or enforcement. In a majority of cases, business partners contracted associations on terms that distributed contributions, benefits, and responsibilities fairly evenly between the two parties. The partnership "pour le commerce de graisserie" between retailers Joseph Cassaignet and Jean Estenaud represents a typical contract of this type.[245] Cassaignet and Estenaud had worked together on the basis of a verbal agreement "for some time," but "wishing to avoid the inconveniences which could result," they formalized a three-year partnership in December 1780. They made nearly equal contributions of around 250 *livres* in initial capital (Cassaignet contributed slightly more), and in return, all merchandise, shop furnishings, profits, and expenses would be shared equally. Likewise, they divided day-to-day responsibilities on roughly even terms. Estenaud was responsible for managing

[245] ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1453, 12/4/1780.

the *caisse sociale*, making and receiving payments, but all purchases had to be made in consultation. Specific terms varied from contract to contract, as occasionally one partner would take on more responsibilities, make a larger initial contribution of capital, or receive a slightly larger share of final profits.[246] Despite these variations, both parties to a business contract extended equal degrees of trust, as they undertook comparable obligations and often had comparable financial stakes in the business.

Retailers and artisans tended to formalize business associations in cases where they were investing large amounts of capital into complex operations. In consequence, any subsequent decision to dissolve the partnership required careful disentanglement of partners' individual claims and responsibilities. Master surgeon Julien Bouvier and apothecary Jean Thenevot contracted a partnership in April 1781 for the joint operation of a pharmacy. When they dissolved their partnership in September of the same year, they carefully divided the responsibilities for their ongoing business.[247] Bouvier sold Thenevot his share of the pharmacy for 14,000 *livres*, signed over the lease for their *maison social*, and ceded his rights and responsibilities for several ongoing joint purchases and sales. These included a shipment of merchandise they had ordered from Nantes; 126 *livres* worth of medicines sent to "Mississipy" for sale, and local orders from the merchant partnership of Blanchardon and Bellot and the Theard and Poirier *habitations* on the North Plain. Finally, Bouvier lost all claim to benefits from the partnership, and relinquished any honorariums from his work as a surgeon that had

[246] For uneven responsibilities: ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1546, 3/29/1778; For uneven contribution/profit share: ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1553, 3/30/1786.
[247] ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1454, 9/10/1781.

gone into the pharmacy's accounts. In return, Bouvier retained ownership of the slaves, furniture, silverware, linen, and other effects that he had contributed to the partnership and was permitted to take his choice of medicines or merchandise from Thenevot's stock, in deduction of the sum owed him for his share of the business. Thenevot claimed responsibility for all of the partnership's outstanding debts, promised to pay Bouvier an additional (unexplained) sum of 4,276 *livres*, and agreed to pay a 330-*livre* honorarium to the notary who had drawn up their business contracts.

Because the reciprocal responsibilities and obligations of business associations required a particularly close trust relationship between partners, these contracts were likely to invoke a familial framework or to be arranged between family members. Amalia Kessler identifies a belief among metropolitan merchants that the business association, or *société*, "epitomized an ideal of merchant sociability," in which partners' mutual liability for debts bound them together by "ties of friendship and trust even stronger than those that were supposed to link all merchants."[248] In a few cases, white artisans and retailers in Cap Français formed business partnerships with family members. For example, master carpenter George Cany and his younger brother Louis contracted a three-year association for "all works of carpentry and related enterprises," and Julien Barbe and his nephew Louis combined their efforts "to work three forges belonging to [him], located in the Place LeBrasseur."[249] Notarial contracts sometimes described such partnerships as a favor from an older relative, as when Thomas Jourdany noted that he only contracted a commercial partnership with his brother Philippe Auguste "to give

[248] Kessler, *Revolution in Commerce*, 161.
[249] ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 5/20/1777; ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1/18/1783.

Jourdany *jeune* his brother the marks of his affection."[250] *Procurations* functioned on similar principles, as in roughly one fourth of cases whites in Cap Français appointed relatives as agents, implicitly relying on shared familial interests to reinforce the bonds of trust. Husbands returning to France left power in the hands of their wives who remained in the colony, and individuals in Cap Français entrusted their siblings in the metropole with family business.

The terms of business associations often encouraged close personal ties between partners, even when not backed by a clear familial relationship. Contracts often included provisions that the funds of the association should provide partners with basic necessities, and sometimes that partners should share room and board.[251] For example, cafe owners Joseph Perrot and Louis Infernet lived together in the same house where their cafe was located, and retailer Barthelemy Dufour retained the right to eat at the table of his partner François Nau "at all times and when he judges it proper."[252] In addition, association contracts often contained provisions to discourage the dissolution of the partnership. Partners wrote arbitration procedures for the resolution of disputes into the majority of contracts. In the event that arbitration failed, and one partner called for an early end to the association, he was often obliged by the terms of the contract to pay his partner an indemnity. For example, when Felix Doubrere and Bernard Longueville formed a three-year association for the management of an inn

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[250] ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1451, 3/6/1779. See also ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1166, 7/27/1782, in which retailer Abraham Torres remarks that he is forming a partnership with his nephew in order to show him "the sensibilité qu'il... temoigne."
[251] Kessler, *Revolution in Commerce*, 150, finds these same provisions in metropolitan contracts.
[252] ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1166, 11/9/1782; ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1455, 9/20/1782.

and a syrup and confiture manufacturing operation, they agreed to pay 10,000 *livres* in damages to end the *société*.[253]

Alternatively, business associations could take the form a limited partnership with an uneven distribution of financial and practical obligations, and thus undertake a different trust relationship. Sometimes one partner acted primarily as an investor, providing most or all of the association's capital, and the other partner contributed only "his work and his industry," and bore nearly all responsibility for day-to-day operations. In return, the investing partner got a share of the profits in exchange for very little day-to-day involvement, thus freeing him to devote his attention to "business for his own account," as did master cooper Pierre Sabourin, or to even to return to France, like master carpenter George Cany.[254] Finally, the investing partner in a limited partnership bore less risk in the event of business failure. While he might lose his initial investment, he would be held less accountable for losses due to his lack of involvement in daily management.[255]

To nuance this discussion, it is worth noting that the preferences of laboring and middling whites were not the only factor that shaped the urban credit market of Cap Français. Free people of color also engaged actively in credit relations, assessing and choosing between partners on the basis of criteria of their own. For example, when whites and free people of color formed business associations, they generally took the

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[253] ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1455, 8/2/1782.
[254] ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1454, 8/2/1781; ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 659, 5/20/1777.
[255] Kessler, *Revolution in Commerce*, 172, notes that contracts for limited partnerships never explicitly invoked limited liability, but that merchants saw it as an implied moral consequence of the business structure.

form of a limited-liability partnership.[256] In her extensive study of notarial contracts in Cap Français, Dominique Rogers found that when whites and free people of color arranged *sociétés*, they almost always entailed an asymmetrical commitment and involvement between the two parties.[257] Usually, Rogers notes, these cross-racial associations were partnerships between artisans, in which a white artisan acted as an investor for a free colored artisan in the same trade, who possessed the necessary skills, but insufficient resources to establish his own business.[258] Rogers finds that when free people of color contracted *sociétés* with each other, they tended to distribute costs, responsibilities, and profits more evenly between partners--just as whites did in contracts with other whites.[259]

In general, free people of color were not as heavily involved in credit-based transactions as whites.[260] This was seemingly a matter of choice: Stewart King finds that when free people of color purchased slaves from whites, only an average of 20% of the purchase price was on credit. In slave sales between free people of color, this average barely changed, to 23% of purchase price on credit.[261] Indeed, free people of color might not have needed credit as desperately as whites, as they were more likely to

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[256] Exceptions to this pattern sometimes come to light, as in the will of Jacques Augustin Lecomte (from context presumably white), who left most of his goods (minus a few bequests) to "*le nommé* Sendé, *mulatre libre*, who works with him, to repay him for the important services he has rendered in his trade, and for the good friendship that he bears him" (ANOM Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1552, 11/27/1785).
[257] Rogers, "Les libres de couleur," 220-222.
[258] Rogers, "Les libres de couleur," 221.
[259] Rogers, "Les libres de couleur," 222.
[260] King, *Blue Coat or Powdered Wig*, 150; Rogers, "Les libres de couleur," 92.
[261] King, *Blue Coat or Powdered Wig*, 150. Jean Hébrard's unpublished work on Marthe Guillaume's credit network as another example.

have real estate assets, or family resource networks, that they could mobilize to raise capital.[262]

Free people of color who chose to engage in trust-based urban commerce had good reasons to prefer to partner with other free people of color for complex or risky enterprises. Free people of color in Cap Français were more likely than whites to be long-term colonial residents with social and familial ties, as well as real estate investments, that anchored them securely in the community. As Dominique Rogers and Stewart King observe, in Cap Français a "rich network of solidarity among people of color" cut across internal distinctions of status and color.[263] Like white retailers and artisans, free people of color tended to extend the greatest trust to members of their kinship group, who were often other free people of color.

Finally, free people of color may have doubted the effectiveness of legal enforcement to compel white business partners to fulfill their obligations. Dominique Rogers argues that the Dominguan courts did not systematically issue racially discriminatory judgments, at least in civil suits.[264] On the other hand, when Julien Raimond addressed the National Assembly about the experiences of the free colored community, he pointed out that whites regularly insulted and harassed free people of

[262] King, *Blue Coat or Powdered Wig*, 148.
[263] Dominique Rogers and Stewart King, "Housekeepers, Merchants, Rentières: Free Women of Color in the Port Cities of Colonial Saint-Domingue, 1750-1790," in *Women in Port*, 357-397.
[264] Rogers, "Les libres de couleur," 358.

color, then taunted them that they would never be punished in court.[265] As Gene Ogle argues, this white self-perception of legal impunity had some grounding in practice.[266]

The colonial logic of racial order coupled with the mutual convertibility of social and economic capital meant that this pattern of racialized partner choice worked to the social benefit of laboring and middling whites. By choosing white partners for trust-intensive business, whites leveraged the metropolitan association between trust and affective ties to embed themselves more fully in the local white community. In doing so, they strengthened their own claims to whiteness.

Migrants who decided to try their luck as retailers or artisans in Cap Français relied on credit exchanges. In Cap Français, they faced a fundamental problem: how to choose creditworthy business partners in a socially fluid and economically volatile environment. They responded by employing metropolitan strategies of social assessment, alongside the familiar safeguards of notaries and courts.

Migrants also adapted metropolitan credit practices to their colonial environment. They signed notarial documents to inscribe their claims of whiteness, leveraged enslaved Africans and Afro descendants to bolster their credit, and strategically chose business partners in a way that tightened their connections to the recognized white community. This entangled combination of social and economic factors--commercial

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[265] Julien Raimond, "Réclamations adressés à l'Assemblée Nationale, par les personnes de Couleur, Propriétaires et Cultivateurs de la Colonie Françoise de Saint-Domingue," 1790, (accessed through Gallica: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5785235b?rk=150215;2), 8.
[266] Gene E. Ogle, "Natural Movements and Dangerous Spectacles: Beatings, Duels, and 'Play' in Saint Domingue," in *New World Orders: Violence, Sanction, and Authority in the Colonial Americas*, John Smolenski and Thomas J. Humphrey, eds. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 239, for legal inequality.

activity, whiteness, slave ownership--lay the foundations of their status and reputation, which in turn dictated their future access to credit, which determined their prospects for economic and social advancement.

The tangled and tenuous world of credit exchange represented one colonial system within which European-born migrants maneuvered to pursue their interests. Credit relationships, however fraught with risk, were a necessary first step to any commercial undertaking in Cap Français and a buffer against the most extreme ups and downs of the plantation economy. In turn, the conceptual linkage between social and economic capital laid the groundwork for laboring and middling whites to improvise status claims that combined whiteness, credit, reputation, and slave ownership. As the following chapter will show, these entangled concepts reinforced each other. They also underpinned the multiple definitions of "mastery" that white retailers and artisans articulated through the urban labor market.

CHAPTER FOUR

MASTERS OF CRAFTS, MASTERS OF SLAVES

In October of 1786, the Chassy-Poulet sisters, who worked together in Cap Français as dressmakers and fashion merchants, were moving up in the commercial world. They were relocating from an apartment to a shop on the central rue Notre-Dame, where they promised customers would find "all sorts of new fashions," from ready-made dresses and cloaks "brodés dans le dernier gôut" to "silk fabric for women's gowns and dresses, superb *toile* from Holland, *mousseline unie*, and generally all kind of merchandise related to their trade." To help manage their expanding business, they advertised for "two or three white workers, dressmakers, to whom [we] will give wages in proportion to their talents." Finally, they offered to take "girls of color" as apprentice dressmakers and modistes.[267]

The Chassy-Poulet sisters, like other white artisans and retailers, found in Cap Français a work environment where their business could thrive. The city stood at the intersection of two overlapping legal regimes that regulated work. First and foremost, the 1685 Code Noir explicitly legalized and legitimated slave labor. The city also legally

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[267] "Les demoiselles *Chassy-Poulet* soeurs ont quittee l'appartement qu'elles occupoient ci-devant près de l'ancien café d'Apollon... Les personnes à qui il pourroit convenir sont priées de s'adresser auxdites demoiselles dans leur nouveau magasin vis-à-vis MM. *Limousin et Saverot*, où elles ont toutes sortes de modes nouvelles, habits, vestes & gilets brodés dans le dernier goût, étoffes de soie pour habits & robes de femmes, superbe toile d'Hollande, mousseline unie, & généralement toutes especes de marchandises concernant leur état; le tout au plus juste prix: elles auroient besoin de deux ou trois ouvrières blanches, couturieres pour robes, auxquelles elles donneront des appointements proportionnes à leurs talents; elles prendront aussi des filles de couleur en apprentissage, pour les modes & les robes." *Feuille du Cap (Numéro 42), Supplément aux Affiches Américaines*, October 18, 1786, "Avis divers," https://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00000449/00019/500x.

resembled a French *lieu privilegiée*, a space where free labor operated outside the regulatory constraints of the guild system. In this chapter, I argue that white retailers and artisans strategically chose advantageous elements from both of these labor regimes. They benefited most, however, from their freedom to combine the two systems, using the rules and language of one to reinforce the other.

Access to enslaved labor was foundational to laboring and middling urban whites' strategies for success. The first section of this chapter explores how le Cap facilitated this access as both a crossroads of Atlantic trade and a legal jurisdiction where the slave law of the Code Noir held sway. White retailers and artisans made strategic use of these conditions, incorporating enslaved people into their business practices as both workers and repositories of value.

The second part of the chapter compares practices of free labor in Cap Français with the legal and social systems that regulated work in metropolitan France. The corporate structures of guild law dominated the metropolitan world of work, but alternate forms of labor organization persisted at the guild system's edges. Free labor in Cap Français resembled one such form, the *lieu privilégiée*. These privileged economic zones gave artisans the freedom to manufacture products and train workers without the restrictive oversight of the *jurés*, or guild regulatory bodies. However, like other non-guild workers, the artisans of the *lieux privilégiées* often used the corporate language of master, journeyman, and apprentice to describe and organize their work relations, using its implied respectability to claim social and economic status for themselves. Likewise, white artisans in Cap Français took advantage of the freedoms they found outside of

guild control. They also selectively deployed the language and concepts of guild work when it suited their interests, advertising themselves as "masters" and drawing up contracts for "apprenticeship" to claim familiar forms of social status without customary forms of oversight.

The final section of the chapter explores how middling and laboring selectively deployed elements of one labor regime to reinforce the other. This section examines the practice of "apprenticing" enslaved workers and analyzes a legal dispute between a master and his free apprentice. Both cases reveal how urban retailers and artisans used multiple forms of labor organization simultaneously, choosing the elements from each that they believed would best serve their economic and social interests.

The overlapping legal regimes that regulated labor in Cap Français--the positive law of the Code Noir and the absence of privileged corporate institutions from the colonial legal structure--each offered a specific set of advantages to middling and laboring whites. This distinctive and mutually reinforcing combination of conditions allowed urban whites to strategically choose among the concepts and practices that structured labor in the colony and the metropole. White retailers and artisans gained the most striking advantages by combining free and enslaved labor to become "masters" of two entangled *ateliers*: the craft workshop, and the enslaved work gang.

Cap Français under the *Code Noir*

White retailers and artisans in Cap Français found it remarkably easy, and profitable, to invest in the brutal economy of slavery. As a confluence point for French Atlantic trade,

the city funneled tens of thousands of enslaved Africans into Saint-Domingue every year.[268] Enslaved labor, regulated and legitimized by France's Code Noir, was a ubiquitous part of urban life. Middling and laboring whites took advantage of their access to enslaved labor, exploiting enslaved Africans and Afro descendants as workers, status symbols, and moveable human "capital."

The economy of Cap Français, like that of other Atlantic port cities, was shaped and driven by its position as a convergence point for multiple markets which operated on a variety of scales. Most prominently, the city was a critical nexus of French Atlantic trade. It served a dual function as the main export site for the colonial commodities produced on the plantations of Saint-Domingue's North Province, and the port of arrival for a steadily increasing population of enslaved Africans. These ocean-spanning markets provided the labor force, and the consumer base, for more localized forms of commerce: the provisioning market dominated by slaves in the city and from surrounding plantations, and the commercial sphere of urban retailers and artisans. [269]

As a diverse local marketplace that thrived at the crossroads of Atlantic trade, Cap Français bore a commercial resemblance to similarly sized and located cities around the circum-Caribbean. Local commerce in the city involved a combination of

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[268] A search of the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database (http://www.slavevoyages.org) gives the troubling figure of 203,800 enslaved Africans disembarked in Cap Français between 1763 and 1789.

[269] For the role of port cities as sites of integration of Atlantic and locally-oriented commerce, see Gregory O'Malley, "Slavery's Converging Ground: Charleston's Slave Trade as the Black Heart of the Lowcountry," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 74 (2017): 271-302; Trevor Burnard and Emma Hart, "Kingston, Jamaica, and Charleston, South Carolina: A New Look at Comparative Urbanization in Plantation Colonial British America," *Journal of Urban History* 39 (2012): 214-234; Philip D. Curtin, "Preface," in *Atlantic Port Cities: Economy, Culture, and Society in the Atlantic World, 1650-1850*, ed. Franklin W. Knight and Peggy Liss (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991); Anne Pérotin-Dumon, *La Ville aux îles, la ville dans l'île: Basse-Terre et Pointe-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe, 1650-1820* (Paris; Karthala, cop., 2000); Douglas Catterall and Jody Campbell, eds., *Women in Port: Gendering Communities, Economies, and Social Networks in Atlantic Port Cities, 1500-1800* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

slaves, whites, and free people of color, who engaged in multiple forms of marketing and production. David Geggus describes the city as the site of "a continuum of retail activity--part-time and full -time, carried on by whites, slaves, and free coloreds--from shops and warehouses, permanent and temporary market stalls, and cloths spread on the ground."[270] Trevor Burnard and Emma Hart find that this array of practices and producers, with its distinctive interpenetration of "slavery, modernity, and a market economy," was characteristic of urban service economies from the Carolinas south through the Caribbean.[271] These cities fostered dynamic, Atlantic-oriented consumer economies in which middling whites could thrive and profit by combining metropolitan marketing practices with a reliance on enslaved labor.[272] Similarly, Seth Rockman argues that in early republican Baltimore, the institution of slavery and "modern" marketing practices were not antithetical, but instead closely entwined, as the success of the city's entrepreneurs resulted from their ability to manipulate a diverse pool of workers, both free and enslaved.[273] Fortune-seekers in Cap Français, as in Kingston, Charleston, or Baltimore, could choose from a variety of workers and commercial practices, to find the labor configuration that best served their interests.

The legal foundation of this diversity of labor forms was the *Code Noir*, which regulated slavery in the French empire. In France, tribunals consistently upheld a "free soil" principle, by which slaves could claim freedom upon touching French soil, although

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[270] David Geggus, "The Major Port Towns of Saint Domingue in the Later Eighteenth Century," in *Atlantic Port Cities: Economy, Culture, and Society in the Atlantic World, 1650-1850*, ed. Franklin W. Knight and Peggy K. Liss (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 98.
[271] Burnard and Hart, "Kingston, Jamaica, and Charleston, South Carolina," 215.
[272] Burnard and Hart, "Kingston, Jamaica, and Charleston, South Carolina," 222.
[273] Seth Rockman, *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 4-8.

a number of amendments to the doctrine were introduced over the course of the eighteenth century to protect the property rights of colonists who brought their slaves to France. Since its inception in 1685, state legislation supporting colonial slavery constituted an exception to the French freedom policy, one that required persistent rationalization and justification.[274] Malick Ghachem characterizes the Code Noir less as a monolithic piece of legislation than as a body of free-standing legal texts, or even a permanent debate that rested at the heart of colonial society and legal culture, and in which slaves and free people of color were participants, not merely subjects.[275] However, the practical function of the Code Noir, from the perspective of fortune-seeking white migrants in Cap Français, was to enhance the benefits of the city's deregulated white labor market by legitimizing the exploitation of enslaved black laborers in ways that would not be possible with free workers in the metropole.

White artisans and retailers in Cap Français were particularly well-positioned to take practical advantage of their legal access to enslaved labor. Cap Français, as the first destination for roughly half of all slave ships bound for Saint-Domingue, had an abundantly supplied slave market.[276] In consequence, slave labor was ubiquitous in the city: by the end of the 1780s, about 10,000 enslaved people lived and worked in Cap

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[274] Malick Ghachem, *The Old Regime and the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, U.K., and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 69; Sue Peabody, *"There Are No Slaves in France": The Political Culture of Race and Slavery in the Ancien Régime* (New York and Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 1996).

[275] Ghachem, *The Old Regime and the Haitian Revolution*, 5-7; Vernon V. Palmer, "The Origins and Authors of the Code Noir," *Louisiana Law Review* Vol. 56, No. 2 (1995-1996): 363-408; Vernon V. Palmer, *Through the Codes Darkly: Slave Law and Civil Law in Louisiana* (Clark, N.J.: The Lawbook Exchange, Ltd., 2012).

[276] Trevor Burnard and John Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine: Atlantic Capitalism in French Saint-Domingue and British Jamaica* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 60.

Français, where they comprised 67% of the urban population.[277] All local commerce and production, including waterfront occupations, craft workshops, and the building trades, relied heavily on enslaved labor. Further, roughly half of the urban slave population may have been employed in domestic service.[278] Slaves also played an outsized role in food provisioning, as slaves from surrounding plantations provided most of the produce consumed in the city. This racialized market function was built visibly into the city's public space, as on Sundays the bustling Place Clugny was transformed into the so-called "*marché des nègres*," where nearly 15,000 slaves would come into the city to buy and sell their merchandise.[279]

Middling whites could take part in this brutal economy with relative ease. The constant influx of newly enslaved Africans meant that slave prices in the city tended to be lower than those in smaller ports elsewhere in the colony, and even than those in Port-au-Prince. Dominique Rogers finds that a male *bossale* slave, newly arrived from Africa, ordinarily sold for an average of between 1,800 and 2,000 *livres* in Cap Français, while buyers in Port-au-Prince paid an average of 2,888 *livres* for a man and 2,326 *livres* for a woman.[280] Initial expenses would have been the most significant limitation on

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[277] Burnard and Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine*, 60.
[278] David Geggus, "The Slaves and Free People of Color of Cap Français," in *The Black Urban Atlantic in the Age of the Slave Trade*, ed. Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, Matt D. Childs, and James Sidbury (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 110; Geggus, "Major Port Towns," in Knight and Liss, *Atlantic Port Cities*, 109.
[279] Geggus, "Major Port Towns," 99; Méderic-Louis-Elié Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie française de l'isle de Saint-Domingue, Avec des Observations générales sur sa Population, sur le Caractère et les Moeurs de ses divers Habitants; sur son Climat, sa Culture, ses Productions, son Administration, &c. &c*. Tome premier (A Philadelphie, 1797), 441.
[280] Dominique Rogers, "Les libres de couleur dans les capitales de Saint-Domingue: fortune, mentalités et intégration à la fin de l'Ancien Régime (1776-1789)" (PhD diss., Université Michel Montaigne, Bordeaux III, 1999),104.

would-be masters, but colonial whites often had easy access to credit, such that one observer estimated that they commonly paid only one-third of the value of their slaves at the time of sale.[281]

For white migrants involved in urban commerce and artisanal production, slaves were important because they constituted a form of moveable labor to whom whites had no pressing legal or social obligations. As such, they could be controlled, exchanged, and disposed of in ways that free workers could not. White artisans and shopkeepers often conceptualized their enslaved workers as part of the inventory and furnishings of their shop, tools and materials that could be sold when necessary, either separately or as an ensemble. On his deathbed, François Davine, master carriage-maker, arranged for the sale of his workshop, which comprised "the *nègres* workers, merchandise, wood for making carts and carriages, iron pieces, and other tools."[282] Sieur Baumont, who kept a shop on the rue Saint-Domingue, sold the inventory of his store, along with "a good *nègre* shopkeeper," when he departed for France.[283] When the tobacconist Guertin advertised the sale of his shop, he listed "two *Nègres*, one of whom knows perfectly how to prepare tobacco, to the taste of all the world," along with the rest of the shop's merchandise, but offered the business "with or without *Nègres*, as the Purchaser desires."[284]

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[281] Alexandre-Stanislas Wimpffen, quoted in Stewart King, *Blue Coat or Powdered Wig: Free People of Color in Pre-Revolutionary Saint Domingue* (Athens, Georgia, and London, U.K.: The University of Georgia Press, 2011), 150.
[282] ANOM, Notariat de Saint-Domingue 616, Testament, 2/5/1777.
[283] *Les Affiches Américaines*, "Avis divers," 12/1/1784.
[284] *Les Affiches Américaines*, "Avis divers," 3/15/1788.

White artisans and petty traders organized their businesses around their access to enslaved workers, evaluating such human beings as an ordinary element of the cost of operations. Business partners engaging in enterprises ranging from coastal trade to carpentry all incorporated the sale and ownership of slaves into their terms of association. Merchants Salomon Isla and Abraham Torres agreed that they would share all expenses equally, including "the rental of a house, and the deaths of slaves, should any occur."[285] When Antoine Curet sold his café to Jean Bucelle and Pierre Solary, the sale included an assortment of tables, chairs, billiard tables, and dishware, but also two slaves, Leveillé, and L'Esperance.[286] These business contracts incorporate enslaved "property" in a way that reveals that for urban whites, just as Dominique Rogers observes of free people of color, a slave was "not only a source of everyday help, but also a monetary instrument," useful as a means of payment as well as a source of labor.[287] Pierre Rausier and Jean Paul François Maury began a joint venture of a bakery and dry-goods business using a combination of merchandise, cash, horses, and slaves as the starting capital fund. In an attached inventory, they made no distinction between human and other forms of capital. The enumeration of Rausier's share of the fund proceeds fluidly from "an estimated 31 hams... one barrel of flour... seven iron forks..." to "a *nègre* named Bienvenu; a *négresse* named Marie Louise, aged 17 years; a *négresse* named Anne; [and] a horse."[288]

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[285] ANOM, Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1165, Société, 5/15/1781.
[286] ANOM, Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1166, Vente esclaves et biens, 1/15/1782.
[287] Rogers, "Les libres de couleur dans les capitales de Saint-Domingue," 98.
[288] ANOM, Notariat de Saint-Domingue 659, Société, 8/27/1780.

In Cap Français, three major economic flows converged: the transatlantic slave trade, the Atlantic exchange of plantation commodities, and the import trade in French foodstuffs and luxury goods. An important dimension of urban commerce was thus the city's Atlantic-oriented service economy. As in similarly organized urban economies around the circum-Caribbean, retailers and artisans in le Cap catered to the planters and merchants involved in the plantation economy while also taking advantage of the easy access to enslaved labor which that economy afforded them. White retailers and artisans used enslaved workers to supply much of the labor that would, in France, have been done by free workers instead. Further, the bodies of enslaved workers, assigned a monetary value, were often sold or exchanged to finance urban businesses.

Cap Français as *lieu privilégiée*

If the availability of enslaved labor in the urban service economy constituted one key advantage for middling whites who established businesses in Cap Français, the lack of a formal guild system represented another. The former resulted from the slave law of the *Code Noir*, while the latter was a consequence of the "legal peculiarity" that left the colony with no privileged corporate institutions.[289] This section describes the metropolitan world of corporate work and the alternative labor regimes that existed at its edges to highlight, by contrast, the benefits of unregulated free labor in Cap Français. Laboring and middling whites took advantage of this second instance of French imperial

[289] Miranda Spieler, "The Legal Structure of Colonial Rule during the French Revolution," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 66 (2009), 370.

legal pluralism, selectively using corporate language to assert status claims while remaining unrestricted by the formal oversight of the guild system.

While the administrative structure of Saint-Domingue, in which authority was shared uneasily between governor and intendant, superficially resembled that of a metropolitan province, the colony's lack of privileged, corporately organized institutions set it apart.[290] Saint-Domingue, like the rest of France's overseas empire, was legally subject to the Coutume de Paris, the private law code that governed Paris and its surrounding territory. However, the structure of colonial rule did not incorporate the overlapping system of privileges through which metropolitan authority was exercised and diffused. Miranda Spieler argues that colonial legal space was "a zone where constitutions did not apply," and where officials could exercise authority relatively unimpeded by the contractual promise of the monarchy to respect the privileges and institutions of the provinces, as was necessary in the metropole.[291] This might be an overstatement in the case of Saint-Domingue, where a powerful *Conseil supérieur* tended to counterbalance the influence of the colonial governor and intendant. However, below the *Conseil*, the colony had no institutions corresponding to the privileged corporate interests of cities or trades that played such a powerful role in metropolitan social and political life. Privilege could confer social status and political authority, but also dictated payment of taxes, determined obligations for military service,

[290] Abbé Raynal, *Essai sur l'administration*, 144, discussed in Gene E. Ogle, "Policing Saint Domingue: Race, Violence, and Honor in an Old Regime Colony," (PhD Diss., Pennsylvania State University, 2003), 258.
[291] Spieler, "The Legal Structure of Colonial Rule," 370-371.

influenced social mobility, and opened or closed occupational opportunities.[292] In the colonies, the absence of privileged institutions thus distinctively shaped the terms and possibilities for civic belonging and economic advancement.

The institutions that governed work in metropolitan France had both advantages and drawbacks for the retailers and artisans who fell under their authority. To understand how migrants to Cap Français strategically chose among metropolitan practices and concepts of labor, it is worth exploring the metropolitan world of work in some detail.

In the urban work environment of Cap Français, the most conspicuously absent metropolitan institutions were the guilds, the corporate trade bodies which dominated the organization of work in French cities. In Old Regime France, where legal and social status was determined by membership in privileged *corps*, guilds were the most common corporate bodies, and one of the only ones open to members of the Third Estate. Within the ordered world of the kingdom, guilds gave urban workers a recognized place in the social order and a legally sanctioned identity. In the context of civic administration and organization, trade corporations exercised a police function, regulating training and hiring practices as well as production and sales. Through the guild, members had access to economic privileges, social status, and a formal political relationship with municipal and royal authorities.[293] William Sewell describes the division

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[292] Gail Bossenga, *The Politics of Privilege: Old Regime and Revolution in Lille* (Cambridge, U.K. and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 5-6.

[293] Dean T. Ferguson, "The Body, the Corporate Idiom, and the Police of the Unincorporated Worker in Early Modern France," *French Historical Studies* 23 (2000), 547; Clare Haru Crowston, *Fabricating Women: The Seamstresses of Old Regime France, 1675-1791* (Durham, N.C., and London, U.K.: Duke University Press, 2001), 256-257; Steven L. Kaplan, *The Bakers of Paris and the Bread Question, 1700-1775* (Durham, N.C., and London, U.K.: Duke University Press, 1996), 164-165.

between corporate and unincorporated work as a fundamental "boundary between order and disorder."[294]

Despite the overarching theoretical importance of the guild system, in practice, only a minority of urban laborers worked within the guild structure.[295] The number of unincorporated artisans increased steadily over the course of the eighteenth century in response to rising consumer demand, an influx of rural migrants, and narrowing access to guild mastership.[296] Many common professions, including domestic service, port and transportation work, and marketing of food and small goods, were not guild-regulated trades. In addition, non-guild artisans frequently practiced guild-regulated trades, sometimes illegally, but also within a number of privileged urban jurisdictions established during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These *lieux privilégiées*, such as the *faubourg* Saint-Antoine in Paris, or the *sauvetats* of Saint-André and Saint-Seurin in Bordeaux, enjoyed a sort of legal "double privilege": the privilege of exemption from the corporate privilege of the guild system.[297] Workers in these enclaves did not receive the social or economic benefits of guild membership, but they were free from corporate regulations. They were permitted to practice their trades without formal guild mastership, allowing them to avoid restrictive entrance rules and fees. In addition, workers in the *lieux privilégiées* could conduct their business without oversight from

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[294] Quoted in Ferguson, "Police of the Unincorporated Worker," 548.
[295] Crowston, *Fabricating Women*, 85, notes that the population of Paris in the 1720s included 32,000 guild masters, out of a total of approximately 500,000; further, in the rural villages, where 85% of French people lived, peasants and artisans worked outside of the guild structure.
[296] Daniel Heimmermann, *Work, Regulation, and Identity in Provincial France: The Bordeaux Leather Trades, 1740-1815* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 41.
[297] Jeff Horn, *Economic Development in Early Modern France: The Privilege of Liberty, 1650-1820* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 5.

guild officials, although they were still subject to the regulations of the municipal police.[298]

For contemporary observers, the unregulated work environment of the *lieux privilégiées* had social and cultural, as well as economic, implications. From the seventeenth into the eighteenth centuries, guild critics portrayed workers in liberalized enclaves as politically suspect, morally corrupt, and technically deficient. A 1727 complaint about the *faubourg* Saint-Antoine denounced its inhabitants as dangerous because they were "unknowns," unregistered workers who operated outside of any traditional social classification.[299] However, this image of the disorderly *faubourg* reveals more about guild fears than about the realities of *faubourg* work and society.[300] A number of studies have found that the guild system's ideological reach extended beyond its institutional control, as many non-guild workers, from unskilled immigrant workers in the Parisian building trades to dockhands in Marseille to self-proclaimed "masters" in the *lieux privilégiées*, organized themselves in a semblance of the guild model and used corporate-style arguments to claim prerogatives over their competitors.[301]

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[298] Heimmermann, *Work, Regulation, and Identity*, 130-131; Alain Thillay, *Le Faubourg Saint-Antoine et ses 'faux-ouvriers': Le liberté du travail à Paris aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 2002), 94.
[299] Steven L. Kaplan, "Les corporations, les 'faux ouvriers' et le faubourg Saint-Antoine au XVIIIe siècle." *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 43 (1988), 356.
[300] Kaplan, "Les corporations, les 'faux ouvriers' et le faubourg Saint-Antoine," 270.
[301] Haim Burstin, "Unskilled Labor in Paris at the End of the Eighteenth Century," in *The Workplace Before the Factory*, ed. Thomas Max Safley and Leonard N. Rosenband (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), 70-72; Heimmermann, *Work, Regulation, and Identity*, 145; Thillay, *Le Faubourg Saint-Antoine et ses 'faux-ouvriers'*, 181.

Even as non-guild workers voluntarily reproduced certain aspects of the guild model, the labor market and production practices of the *lieux privilégiées* encouraged social and economic departures from the work culture of the trade corporations. Unlike the guild system, in which social status shaped and underwrote economic networks, in the privileged enclaves, the marketplace had a more pronounced function as arbiter of social and economic relations. The privileged enclaves did not promote a total pretense of social equality or confusion of status, as their guild critics claimed. However, as Steven Kaplan finds, they fostered "a necessarily high mutual tolerance, a great fluidity of contacts and exchanges, and fewer barriers to entry than elsewhere."[302] More significantly, the comparative lack of regulation in the *lieux privilégiées* provided a "laboratory" setting in which craftsmen could experiment with different ways of organizing production.[303] This organizational freedom resulted in a variety of production models, from the traditional-looking workshop consisting of one "master" accompanied by one or two workers, to much larger manufacturing operations that emphasized technical progress and rationalized division of labor. Historians have thus tended to characterize privileged enclaves as seeds of economic modernization, planted in the midst of the traditional, corporate world of work: in the absence of guild interference, the "spirit of enterprise" had free rein in pursuit of profit.[304]

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[302] Kaplan, "Les corporations, les 'faux ouvriers' et le faubourg Saint-Antoine," 363-364.
[303] Kaplan, "Les corporations, les 'faux ouvriers' et le faubourg Saint-Antoine," 370; Thillay, *Le Faubourg Saint-Antoine et ses 'faux-ouvriers'*, 159.
[304] Thillay, *Le Faubourg Saint-Antoine et ses 'faux-ouvriers'*, 163; Kaplan, "Les corporations, les 'faux ouvriers' et le faubourg Saint-Antoine," 371; Horn, *The Privilege of Liberty*, 5, 27, 37.

The unregulated "free market" conditions of the *lieux privilégiées* thus closely resemble those encountered by white retailers and artisans in Cap Français. This is not to say that free labor in the city was entirely unregulated. The *Conseil supérieur* issued occasional judgments aimed at maintaining public order and sanitation, bakeries were subject to strict royal regulations, and certain businesses, including butchers' shops, and some cafés and cabarets were operated by royal *fermiers* who had paid for the privilege.[305] However, unlike the government of a French province, the administrative structure of Saint-Domingue did not include any level of corporate authority.[306] In the absence of the regulatory force of the guild *jurés*, free labor in Cap Français was subject only to the loose oversight of the municipal police.[307]

Without *jurés* as gatekeepers, anyone who wanted to take up a trade or run a workshop in Cap Français only had to acquire the necessary tools and labor. Dominique Roux arrived from Bordeaux in 1778 and soon found himself running out of money. He wrote to his wife that he had been "forced, despite [him]self...to work as a blacksmith" while waiting for a better opportunity to arise.[308] He was not happy about this turn of events, but trouble setting up shop did not feature in the litany of complaints that filled the rest of his letter. Urban residents returning to France or relocating to their plantations often sold the entire stock of their boutiques or workshops, including enslaved workers. Initial expenses would have been the most significant limitation on

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[305] For more about the operation of colonial *fermes*, see Jean Hébrard, "Les deux vies de Michel Vincent, colon à Saint-Domingue (c. 1730-1804)," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine (1954-)*, T. 57e, No. 2 (avril-joun 2010), 57-59.
[306] Raynal, *Essai sur l'administration*, 144, as discussed in Ogle, "Policing Saint Domingue," 258.
[307] James E. McClellan III, *Colonialism and Science: Saint Domingue in the Old Regime* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 90.
[308] National Archives, HCA 30/283, Dominique Roux to wife, 9/25/1778.

would-be retailers and artisans, and even this would have been a relatively low barrier to aspiring entrepreneurs who could make purchases on credit. In August of 1784, an aspiring entrepreneur could purchase "two excellent *Nègres* Carpenters... as well as the four volumes of *Carpentry*, in-fol., by Nicolas Fourneau," and be in business.[309]

Even as laboring and middling whites took advantage of their freedom from guild oversight, they selectively used guild language for its cultural and social cachet. Although the trade corporations had no legal presence in Saint-Domingue, corporate terminology, with its connotations of patriarchal order, social respectability, and reputable production, still had cultural weight. Several artisans referred to their own past apprenticeships as a tool of self-promotion, an indicator of their skills and, sometimes, of their direct connections to the "French" world of fashion. M[adame] and Mlle Cherny, Parisian fashion merchants who opened a boutique in early 1784, advertised themselves as "students of Mademoiselle Bertin, fashion merchant to the Queen in Paris."[310] Monsieur Claude-Bernard, a saddle maker, advertised his "bridles in the French style," assuring "Messieurs les Habitants" that he "knew these sorts of works particularly well, having done his apprenticeship in this trade in France."[311]

Artisans gained even more of an edge in the colonial marketplace through their ability to name themselves as "master" whether or not they had actually met the qualifications of any guild in France. By the late eighteenth century, many metropolitan

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[309] *Affiches américaines*, 8/18/1784.
[310] *Les Affiches Américaines*, "Avis divers," 2/25/1784. Rose Bertin, personal *marchande de modes* to Marie Antoinette, was a well-known figure in France in the late eighteenth century. For more detail, see Clare Haru Crowston, "The Queen and her 'Minister of Fashion': Gender, Credit, and Politics in Pre-Revolutionary France," *Gender and History*, Vol. 14, Issue 1 (April 2002): 92-117.
[311] *Les Affiches Américaines*, "Avis divers," 8/15/1789.

guilds were becoming more exclusive, setting higher financial requirements for entry and restricting access to masterships.[312] As a result, an increasing number of artisans were stuck as journeymen, unable to legally set up their own shops outside of the few *lieux privilégiées*.

Recognition as a master craftsman had implications beyond the legal and economic, as it conveyed a degree of social honor and, as Daniel Roche notes, "at least the hope of a certain social mobility."[313] When the title was claimed in the notarial records of Cap-Français, it also reinforced assertions of whiteness. Stewart King observes that although free colored artisans were often possessed of the same technical skills, and offered the same types of training, as their white counterparts, only white craftsmen were identified in the notarial registers as "master" of any given trade.[314] When Jean Ouancoco, a free black cook, drew up a contract for an apprenticeship, he was not named as "master". Further, the contract explicitly marked his free-colored status, noting that he was "formerly called Joseph Dutil"--a name he lost the right to use due to the 1773 regulation that dictated that free people of color must take a surname drawn from "the African idiom", their trade, or their color.[315] Thus, even when white and free colored artisans received similar compensation for their

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[312] Edward J. Shephard, Jr., "Social and Geographic Mobility of the Eighteenth-Century Guild Artisan: An Analysis of Guild Receptions in Dijon, 1700-1790," in *Work in France*, ed. Cynthia Koepp and Steven Kaplan (Cornell and London: Ithaca University Press, 1986).
[313] Daniel Roche, "Work, Fellowship, and Some Economic Realities of Eighteenth-Century France," in *Work in France: Representations, Meaning, Organization, and Practice*, ed. Cynthia Koepp and Steven Kaplan (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1986), 2.
[314] King, *Blue Coat or Powdered Wig*, 154-155.
[315] Rogers, "Les libres de couleur," 281-282.

services or comparable local recognition for their skill, only self-styled white "masters" could lay documentary claim to the title and its advantages.[316]

An examination of the language of "apprenticeship" as it appeared in notarized contracts in Cap Français gives further insight into how, and why, white artisans chose to adapt certain metropolitan forms of labor organization to the colonial world of work. Apprenticeship, as a model of professional training, was not unique to the guild system. Apprenticeship was used in a variety of non-guild contexts, including royal manufactories, training in hospitals and girls' schools, and private forms of training based on the corporate model but without formal mechanisms for integration into the guild system.[317] However, within the context of guild-regulated work, the institution of apprenticeship served several specific functions. It was a reputable way to transmit professional skills, a means of inculcating the hierarchical social relations of the workshop, and a mechanism to introduce new members into the guild structure.[318] In addition, the power of guild authorities to regulate and intervene in the master-apprentice relationship further reinforced the hierarchical corporate order.[319] In the deregulated labor market of Cap Français, by contrast, the language of apprenticeship had no fixed legal meaning. Although it lost its specific significance as an entry point and enforcement mechanism for the guilds, colonial "apprenticeship" continued to

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316 King, *Blue Coat or Powdered Wig*, 154-155, for comparable apprenticeship fees of white and free colored artisans; Rogers, 74 for free colored artisans being consulted to verify quality of local work.
317 Crowston, "L'apprentissage hors des corporations," 414-415.
318 Crowston, *Fabricating Women*, 298.
319 Steven Kaplan, "L'apprentissage au XVIIIe siècle: le cas de Paris," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 40 (1993), 437-438.

suggest the skilled production and patriarchal authority of the craft workshop.[320] White artisans selectively applied the term "apprentice" as a flexible way to describe and legitimize their training of, and authority over, young or unskilled workers--again benefiting from the language of the corporate world of work without having to submit to guild policing and authority.

Apprenticeship contracts for free laborers in Cap Français reveal that the apprenticeship model retained its social function, simultaneously promoting hierarchical order, delineating a relationship of obligation, and facilitating social integration. In the absence of any guild system to issue or oversee official apprenticeship requirements, free workers in Cap Français rarely drew up formal apprenticeship contracts. On the rare occasions that they did, the documents bear a close resemblance to the formulaic apprenticeship contracts produced by guild notaries in France.[321] The contracts first name the three individuals bound by the contract: the apprentice, their guardian, and the master or mistress charged with their training, then proceed to list the obligations and responsibilities of each of the three. The only significant departure from metropolitan contracts is the absence of the two guild officials who typically witnessed contracts, as a written reminder of the guild's regulatory authority.[322] However, this difference may not have seemed so significant in practice, as guild members often preferred to handle any difficulties within the master-apprentice relationship through the

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[320] Artisans in colonial Louisiana also formalized apprenticeship contracts in the absence of a guild system: Thomas Ingersoll, *Mammon and Manon in Early New Orleans: The First Slave Society in the Deep South, 1718-1819* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 62-63, for examples.
[321] Crowston, *Fabricating Women*, 301-302.
[322] Kaplan, "L'apprentissage au XVIIIe siècle," 437.

mediation of the apprentice's family, or by community oversight, before seeking legal intervention from guild officials.[323]

The reciprocal obligations of guardian, master, and apprentice reveal that free artisans in Cap Français made strategic use of the organizational model of guild training, for the social and economic benefit of all three parties to the contract. These obligations, expressed in language familiar from metropolitan contracts, reference metropolitan ideals of apprenticeship as a social and moral relation as well as an economic arrangement.[324]

The guardian of a prospective apprentice hoped to secure future employment and social position for a minor in their care. Several guardians in Cap Français emphasized that they were acting in the apprentice's best interest. Master mason Pierre Claveau placed his daughter Jeannette with Dame Mourois, a maker of women's clothing, for Jeannette's "good and advantage," a phrase also used by the *mulâtresse* Marie Catherine with regard to her nephew Pantaleon, and Marie Louise, known as Sistera, for her son Pierre Antoine.[325] The merchant Pierre Allais similarly apprenticed Pierre, *mulâtre libre*, "for [his] profit and advantage."[326]

In exchange for future benefits to the apprentice, guardians promised to uphold the authority of the master or mistress during the apprenticeship and agreed to pay an

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[323] Clare Haru Crowston, "Apprentices Bound to Labor? Contract, Coercion and Violence in Mid-Eighteenth Century Paris" (presentation, The Johns Hopkins History Department Seminar, Baltimore, MD, February 27, 2016).
[324] Kaplan, "L'apprentissage au XVIIIe siècle," 440-441. Kaplan describes the mutual obligations of guild contracts as an "engagement morale [qui] joue un rôle capital dans son système idéologique et dans sa représentation formelle d'elle-même."
[325] ANOM, Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1166, Apprentissage, 7/26/1783; ANOM, Notariat de Saint-Domingue 542, Apprentissage, 12/1783.
[326] ANOM, Notariat de Saint-Domingue 542, Apprentissage, 6/3/1783.

indemnity if they failed to do so. Most guardians promised that if the apprentice ran away from their master, they would take responsibility for finding and returning them. This promise was sometimes backed by financial guarantees, perhaps to replace the legal assurance that would have been provided by guild authorities in the metropole. Pierre Allais would be held responsible for all expenses and damages incurred by Pierre's absence, while Marie Catherine agreed that if Pantaleon did not wish to finish his six-year term as an apprentice joiner with the free black François André Boucanier, she would pay Boucanier 600 *livres* per year for the years he did not complete. Pierre Claveau retained the right to remove Jeannette from her apprenticeship whenever he wished, but would have to pay Dame Mourois a 600-*livre* indemnity if he did so.

Masters and mistresses who took apprentices agreed to impart a specialized set of skills, and at the same time to assume at least partial responsibility for the care of their apprentice. Most masters also agreed to provide their apprentices with lodging, food, clothing, and medical treatment, although guardians sometimes bore a share of these responsibilities. All promised to teach their trade, sometimes assuring thorough instruction by specifying that they would do so "to the best of their ability," or that they would include "everything comprised in [the trade]".[327] Masters also promised that they would not subject their apprentices to rough treatment, nor make excessive demands of them. François Simbre, a free black mason, agreed to treat his apprentice "humanely

[327] ANOM, Notariat de Saint-Domingue 542, Apprentissage, 12/27/1783; ANOM, Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1450, Apprentissage, 6/7/1778; ANOM, Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1450, Apprentissage, 10/17/1778.

and gently," as did the tailor Louis Charles Metayer, while Dame Mourois promised that she would not make Jeannette work at tasks other than her training as a seamstress.[328]

Masters gained a financial advantage from apprenticeships, as taking an apprentice meant gaining the profits of their labor during the time they were in a master's household. The indemnities imposed on guardians for absent apprentices or cancelled contracts did not only guarantee compliance but may have also been intended to compensate for potential lost income. In addition, in the clauses that addressed the potential problem of runaway apprentices, masters often show a concern not only for their authority, but also for the term of apprentice labor promised to them. If Louis Charles Metayer's apprentice, André, was absent from his shop for any reason, not only was he to be returned, but Metayer was allowed to retain him after the expiration of his three-year contract, "for the length of time that he was absent from the shop against [Metayer's] will."[329] François Simbré made the same requirement for his apprentice, Patrice.[330]

Accepting an apprentice could also reinforce masters' and mistresses' social position. The terms of the apprenticeship contract granted masters a form of patriarchal authority over their apprentices, one which the apprentice's parents or guardians agreed to support. Further, when a master was asked to take an apprentice, it was a mark of social recognition that they possessed important skills, and the authority to teach them. This aspect of apprenticeship in Cap Français may have been particularly important for

[328] ANOM, Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1166, Apprentissage, 7/26/1783.
[329] ANOM, Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1450, Apprentissage, 10/17/1778.
[330] ANOM, Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1450, Apprentissage, 6/7/1778.

the free colored artisans who accepted apprentices. Free people of color were generally considered to be ineligible for master status in metropolitan guilds, and even in the more loosely organized free labor market of Cap Français, they were rarely identified as "master," unlike white artisans.[331] Taking apprentices, then, granted some of the social recognition and prerogatives associated with craft mastery, even without the informal or formal title.

Finally, apprenticeship contracts benefited the apprentices themselves, who gained the social and economic advantages of training in a trade. In the guild context, apprenticeship functioned as the only means for non-relatives of masters to achieve the economic privileges and social status of guild membership.[332] However, formally contracted guild apprenticeship was not the only model of professional training in the metropole: alternative forms such as internal apprenticeships in royal manufactories or charitable instruction through hospitals or religious institutions provided trade skills without access to corporate membership.[333] Colonial apprenticeship arrangements technically most resemble the metropolitan practice of *allouage*, in which adolescents received individual training under the terms of a contract that differed from a formal guild apprenticeship only in that *allouées* earned no qualifications that would allow them to be integrated into the corporation as a master.[334] For colonial apprentices, as for their metropolitan counterparts who trained outside the guild system, learning valuable trade

[331] King, *Blue Coat or Powdered Wig*, 154.
[332] Clare Crowston, "L'apprentissage hors des corporations: Les formations professionnelles alternatives à Paris sous l'Ancien Régime," *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 60 (2005), 409.
[333] Crowston, "L'apprentissage hors des corporations," 414.
[334] Crowston, "L'apprentissage hors des corporations," 415.

skills could be benefit enough: as Clare Crowston observes, "[b]ecoming a member of a corporation was an elusive ideal, but the true key to survival and economic integration was the acquisition of a trade."[335] *Allouage* and other forms of non-guild apprenticeship also provided the opportunity to forge valuable social and economic networks that kept workers from being socially marginalized, even if they were not integrated into the guild structure.[336]

Apprentices also benefited from the formal protections of the apprenticeship contract, in which they participated as a consenting party. Colonial apprenticeship contracts, like *allouage* contracts, guaranteed apprentices "the occasion to learn a trade in favorable conditions, with certain contractual protections."[337] In return, apprentices all made some variation of the promise made by thirteen-year-old Patrice to François Simbre: "to learn to the best of his ability all that is shown and taught to him by his master, to obey him in all he commands that is licit and honest; to serve him faithfully and diligently, to avoid any loss to him, and to inform him if any comes to his knowledge; without being permitted to absent himself or to work elsewhere, for the said four years."[338] Of course, their social position gave them very little power of refusal, and the coercive and authority-reinforcing terms of the contract were supported in ways that the protective terms were not: there were no indemnities, for example, to guarantee a master's promise of humane treatment. Likewise, contractual provisions about runaway apprentices point to a control of mobility that is often associated with other forms of

[335] Crowston, "L'apprentissage hors des corporations," 414.
[336] Kaplan, "L'apprentissage au XVIIIe siècle," 463.
[337] Kaplan, "L'apprentissage au XVIIIe siècle," 463.
[338] ANOM, Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1450, Apprentissage, 6/7/1778.

bound labor, including indenture and enslavement. Kaplan finds that in the everyday life of the metropolitan workshop, apprentices suffered less mistreatment from the master than from the journeymen, to whom they were obliged to show deference.[339] For a white or free colored apprentice in a Dominguan workshop that relied primarily on enslaved labor, the colonial racial order might have outweighed the hierarchical order of the shop to provide another sort of protection. Finally, however coercive an apprenticeship may have been, free apprentices promised obedience in exchange for reciprocal obligations, and their obedience had limits in both scope and time.

While much of the actual labor in Cap Français was carried out by slaves, white business owners also employed concepts of mastery and apprenticeship drawn from the corporate organization of free labor in the metropole. In doing so, they took advantage of a gap in the colonial legal structure: the absence of privileged corporate institutions. Middling whites set up stores and workshops, named themselves masters, and contracted apprenticeships, arrogating to themselves the respectable social and cultural associations of corporate membership while avoiding any of the restrictions of formal guild regulations. Retailers and artisans employed this form of free labor organization alongside the slave labor that they accessed under the terms of the *Code Noir*. However, as the final section of this chapter will show, perhaps the most striking benefit afforded to urban whites by the overlapping labor regimes of Cap Français was the ability to strategically combine the separate advantages of slave mastery and craft mastery, such that each system reinforced the other.

[339] Kaplan, "L'apprentissage au XVIIIe siècle," 446.

Masters of two *ateliers*

White artisans and shopkeepers in Cap Français did not only use the language of apprenticeship to describe the training of free laborers, but also applied it to labor arrangements through which enslaved workers would receive specialized skills training. Dominique Rogers finds that much slave skill acquisition in Cap Français took place through informal, personal agreements, as only 13.6%, or six of forty-four, notarized apprenticeship contracts involved enslaved workers.[340] However, slave "apprentices" appear consistently in the *Affiches Américaines*: Jean Baptiste, who ran away from Sieur Simon, wigmaker for the Comédie du Cap, "where he was an apprentice"; an eighteen-year-old "wigmaker and tailor" who "finished his apprenticeship eight months ago with M Daugas, tailor, where he works now"; the sale of a "very good subject, something of a cook, having done an apprenticeship with Monplaisir."[341] By employing the language of craft training for enslaved as well as free workers, urban whites referenced a metropolitan form of hierarchical labor organization to reinforce and further legitimize their control of enslaved laborers. Framing this labor dynamic as an apprenticeship worked to the advantage of both the owners of enslaved apprentices and the free artisans who trained them.

Middling white enslavers could benefit in several ways from having their slaves at work outside of their immediate household. Dominique Rogers treats slave

[340] Rogers, "Les libres de couleur dans les capitales de Saint-Domingue," 102.
[341] *Les Affiches Américaines*, "Esclaves en maronage," 10/16/1782; *Les Affiches Américaines*, "Biens et effets à vendre," 5/22/1781; *Les Affiches Américaines*, "Biens et effets à vendre," 12/25/1782.

apprenticeships as a variant of slave rentals, and finds that renting out enslaved workers could bring in an average net profit of 10% a year.[342] The practice of renting out slaves also enabled calculating masters to save on household expenses, as renters typically provided food, lodging, and medical treatment, and agreed to reimburse the owner in the event of the death, mutilation, or marronnage of a slave in their possession.[343] For slaveowners such as master joiner Mahé, who arranged for the rental of his slaves Pierre and Lafortune while he returned to France, the urban rental market for enslaved labor offered a way to maintain authority over, and some profit from, their human property while avoiding the bureaucracy and expense of bringing slaves with them to France.[344] Owners who entered their slaves into apprenticeships often paid a fee to the master responsible for their training, and sometimes provided for some of their slaves' living expenses, but these payments could be justified as a form of investment in enslaved capital. In the dynamic rental marketplace of Cap Français, where skilled servants and workers were in constant demand, slaves who had been trained in a trade could gain their owners up to 28% of their assessed value in a year.[345]

Master artisans who took enslaved apprentices likewise did so to their advantage. First, in a practical sense, like masters of free apprentices, they gained the value of whatever work the slave performed under their direction. In addition, masters could command apprenticeship fees for their training, and did not always take full

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[342] Rogers, "Les libres de couleur dans les capitales de Saint-Domingue," 101.
[343] Rogers, "Les libres de couleur dans les capitales de Saint-Domingue," 101.
[344] ANOM, Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1449, Bail de negres, 9/17/1777. For restrictions on slaves entering France, see Peabody, *"There Are No Slaves in France"* Jennifer L. Palmer, *Intimate Bonds: Family and Slavery in the French Atlantic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 51-58.
[345] Rogers, "Les libres de couleur dans les capitales de Saint-Domingue," 102.

responsibility for feeding and lodging slaves during their apprenticeship. Jean Pierre Labat paid the master tailor Soutan 600 *livres* to take Azor and Zemire, "a *negrillon* and *negritte* of the Ibo nation," as his apprentices for three years.[346] Sieur Brousse, a wigmaker, offered to train slaves as hairdressers for men or women at a variety of prices: 600 *livres* for six months of instruction, 400 *livres* for four months, and an additional 90 and 60 *livres*, respectively, if owners wished him to provide food and laundry services during the apprenticeship.[347] Joseph Ouancoco, a free black cook, agreed to feed and lodge Jean Louis, the slave of François Curet, "only while he is in good health, and in a condition to work," leaving Curet responsible for providing clothing, treatment, and medical care if Jean Louis became ill.[348] This negotiation of payment and responsibility stands in contrast to the liabilities assumed by slave renters.

By taking enslaved apprentices, free artisans reinforced their authority by layering the two meanings of mastery: management of a craft *atelier* and control of an enslaved labor force. These mutually reinforcing senses could be especially useful in bolstering the authority of craft mistresses, which was conventionally considered to be weaker than that of their male counterparts.[349] Further, by accepting enslaved apprentices, artisans and shopkeepers extended their personal control over a greater number of subordinate workers without the expense of either hiring free laborers or purchasing slaves. In Dominguan society, where a "crowd of slaves... awaited the orders, even the slightest signals, of a single man," and "it was dignified for a rich man

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346 ANOM, Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1167, Donation de negres, 10/14/1786.
347 *Les Affiches Américaines*, "Avis divers," 8/5/1777.
348 ANOM, Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1545, Apprentissage, 1/31/1777.
349 Palmer, *Intimate Bonds*, 121-123.

to have four times as many servants as he needed," access to enslaved labor, even under the temporary terms of an apprenticeship, gave white artisans an immediate claim to social status.[350] Their control of their enslaved apprentice, already implicitly established by the *Code Noir*, was further enforced by contractual provisions like those for free apprentices. In contrast to slave rentals, in which renters were responsible to owners for the loss of slaves through marronnage, the apprenticeship contract between François Curet and Joseph Ouancoco contains the familiar clause that "in the case that the said Jean Louis absents himself from Joseph's household, [Curet] is obliged to find him and return him to the house for the time remaining of the three years [of his apprenticeship]."[351] If Jean Louis did not remain under Ouancoco's exclusive authority for the agreed-upon three years, Curet would be indemnified for "all expenses, damages, and interests."

The enslavers and master artisans who arranged slave apprenticeships evinced little or no consideration for the interests of the slave whose labor was being negotiated, signaling the adaptation of the apprenticeship model to a colonial marketplace fundamentally shaped by the law of slavery. In contracts for free apprenticeships, apprentices themselves appear as a consenting party, agreeing to learn to the best of their ability and to obey their master in everything "licit and honest" concerning their trade. By contrast, Jean Louis played no individual role in the contract that apprenticed him to Ouancoco, there were no specific limits put on his obedience, and it is unclear if he was even present when the contract was signed. Similarly, while the guardians of

[350] Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description de la partie française*, 11.
[351] ANOM, Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1545, Apprentissage, 1/31/1777.

free apprentices often stated that they were making arrangements "for the profit" or "for the good and advantage" of their charges, Labat expressed no thought for Azor and Zemire's interest, and Curet said only that he "wished to have the so-called Jean Louis, *mulâtre*, his slave, learn cooking and pastry-making."[352]

However, while slaveowners and artisans did not arrange slave apprenticeships with the interests of enslaved workers in mind, the enslaved sometimes managed to turn apprenticeships indirectly to their benefit. As Jennifer Palmer observes, the master artisan to whose household they were sent could provide "an alternate locus of authority" to play against that of the slaveowner.[353] In addition, the urban market pattern of training slaves to be rented out as skilled workers meant that, for enslaved workers, the acquisition of skills through an apprenticeship often led to longer-term work away from the direct oversight of their owner, and perhaps opportunities to negotiate for a share of their earnings.[354] Finally, skilled urban slaves enjoyed many of the same benefits as skilled slaves on plantations, including freedom from the drudgery of fieldwork, relative freedom of movement, and the possibility of a common identity based on their skills.[355]

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[352] ANOM, Notariat de Saint-Domingue 1545, Apprentissage, 1/31/1777.
[353] Palmer, *Intimate Bonds*, 122.
[354] For work practices of urban slaves, see, among others, Philip D. Morgan, "Black Life in Eighteenth-Century Charleston," *Perspectives in American History* 1 (1984); David Geggus, "Slave and Free Colored Women in Saint Domingue," in *More Than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas*, ed. David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996); David Geggus, "The Slaves and Free People of Color of Cap Français," in *The Black Urban Atlantic in the Age of the Slave Trade*, ed. Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, Matt D. Childs, and James Sidbury (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).
[355] Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 253.

The practice of arranging "apprenticeships" for the training of enslaved workers was not the only situation in which middling white business owners selectively deployed conventions of chattel slavery and corporate organization to reinforce each other. This chapter concludes by exploring a case in which a master and apprentice, both white, instrumentalized slave labor to resolve an honor dispute in a way that left both parties with their reputations and economic prospects intact.

In April 1777, when furniture dealer Pierre Joseph Leroy's former apprentice threatened to take him to court, he knew that his reputation as a respectable master artisan was in danger. The teenage Marie Jeannette, who had been apprenticed to Leroy two and a half years before, told a familiar story of seduction and dishonor: For the past year, Leroy had shown her "the most assiduous attentions; her natural weakness made her unable to resist the repeated solicitations of Sieur Leroy; instead, she succumbed to them; following from that excessive complaisance, three months earlier she had given birth to a baby boy."[356] Leroy and his wife made sure that the baby was baptized (as the son of "an unknown father") and paid the expenses of Jeannette's delivery, but made no further effort to compensate her for the "wrong that could be done to her if her pregnancy became public knowledge." Leroy neither confirmed nor denied that he had fathered the child, but he was well aware of how the situation appeared: Jeannette had become pregnant while living in his house, under his tutelage and

[356] "...qu'il y a environ deux ans et demi qu'elle auroit été mise par la dame Jean en apprentissage chez ledit Sr Leroy; que pendant le tems de cet apprentissage et surtout pendant la derniere année ledit Sr Leroy auroit eu pour elle les soins les plus assidus; que sa faiblesse naturelle la mise dans le cas de ne pouvoir résister aux sollicitations reitérées dudit Sr Leroy et d'y succombée; que des suittes de cette complaisance excessive auroit mis au [...] il y a environ trois mois un enfant mâle." Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer (hereafter ANOM), Notariat de Saint-Domingue 168, Transaction, 4/27/1777.

authority. Rather than engage in a public court case that would "give the public something to laugh at," to the disadvantage of both parties, Leroy offered Jeannette a generous settlement. He agreed to raise the child in his own home and at his own expense; to make sure he learned a trade when he was old enough; to give Jeannette a mahogany bed complete with mattress, bolster, and curtains made of *indienne*; and finally, to pay her a sum of 1,800 *livres*. Instead of a cash payment or a bill of exchange, Leroy made payment by granting Jeannette the ownership of eighteen-year-old Adelaïde, of the Congo nation.

In this case, Jeannette and Leroy deployed multiple social and economic scripts as they negotiated for the preservation of their respective honor, and with it their access to credit, an important foundation for future economic success. Jeannette's claim of lost honor played upon metropolitan ideas of seduction and illegitimacy. Leroy's desire to avoid a public court case evinced a concern for his reputation as a master artisan. Finally, in their settlement, an enslaved woman represented an acceptable substitution for monetary compensation. Corporate concepts of honor meshed seamlessly with the logic of chattel slavery, to the satisfaction of both Jeannette and Leroy--while utterly disregarding Adelaïde's preferences or interests.

Marie Jeannette found herself facing the potential dishonor of having an illegitimate child and the difficulties of single motherhood. She thus made her claim against Leroy in order to defend her personal honor and secure economic resources. It was not unusual for white women in Saint-Domingue to give birth to children out of wedlock. Although studies of illegitimacy in Saint-Domingue often focus on the mixed-race children of white

men and free or enslaved women of color, illegitimate white children also posed a social and legal "problem" for colonial society.[357] The colonial jurist and commentator Hilliard d'Auberteuil estimated that in 1772(?), out of an urban population of 21,100, 1,200 were white women "prostitutes or living in concubinage."[358] Saint-Domingue was governed by the Coutume de Paris, which denied all illegitimate children, however "illegitimacy" was defined, the right of inheritance. In practice, claims on behalf of illegitimate children were usually decided on a case-by-case basis by the Conseil supérieur, who typically upheld the right of such children to basic paternal support.[359] Metropolitan magistrates during the eighteenth century tended to decide the same way, as an overall rise in rates of illegitimacy and corresponding "foundling crisis" made it clear that ensuring private sources of support for illegitimate children was a matter of public interest.[360] However, this leniency was only extended to the illegitimate offspring of unmarried parents: judicial responses were more severe in cases involving adultery.[361]

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[357] See, for example: Doris Garraway, *The Libertine Colony*; Françoise Verges, *Monsters and Revolutionaries: Colonial Family Romance and Métissage* (Durham, N.C., and London, U.K.: Duke University Press, 1999); John D. Garrigus, "Sons of the Same Father: Gender, Race, and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue, 1760-1792," in *Visions and Revisions of Eighteenth-Century France*, eds. Christine Adams, Jack R. Censer, and Lisa Jane Graham (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997); Matthew Gerber, "Bastardy, Race, and Law in the Eighteenth-Century French Atlantic: The Evidence of Litigation," *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (Fall 2013): 571-600.
[358] Hilliard d'Auberteuil, *Considérations*, Vol. II, 42.
[359] Gerber, "Bastardy, Race, and Law," 584.
[360] For this legal shift, see Matthew Gerber, "Illegitimacy and Legal Change in the French Enlightenment," in *Bastards: Politics, Family, and Law in Early Modern France* (Oxford, U.K., and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). On the subject of rising illegitimacy rates and the "foundling crisis," Desan, *The Family on Trial*, 186, cites an overall national increase in the proportion of illegitimate births during the 1700s, from 1 percent to at least 2.7 percent of total births. This growth varied significantly by region and was particularly marked in urban areas: in Nantes, illegitimate births went from 3% to 10% of all births; from 4% to 12.5% in Lille; in Paris on the eve of the Revolution, the proportion rose as high as 16-20%.
[361] Gerber, *Bastards*, 154.

Leroy, on the other hand, sought to defend his reputation--on which his economic connections depended--from the stains of adultery, seducing a minor, and failing in his social and moral role as a master artisan. In his desire to avoid a public trial, he indicated an awareness that any harsh legal or communal response would fall on him as well as Jeannette. In France, local courts and communities tended to support women who brought paternity suits, both assuming that paternity could be determined in cases of doubt and considering it just that a reluctant father be forced to provide financial support for his child.[362] Julie Hardwick studies such cases within the framework of community policing of young men's--as well as young women's--sexuality. She argues that they illuminate the place of sexuality as "a variable in the many-faceted register in which rank, reputation and competing priorities also complicated male privileges and obligations."[363] Leroy fell outside the demographic of young, unmarried, working men who were most commonly named in paternity suits.[364] However, the economic and cultural structures of corporate work also dictated limits of appropriate sexual behavior for married master artisans. Seducing and impregnating a female apprentice fell distinctly outside of those bounds.

Jeannette's threat of legal action against Leroy bears some resemblance to the *déclarations de grossesse* and paternity suits of her metropolitan peers.[365] Suzanne

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[362] Desan, *The Family on Trial,* 183.
[363] Julie Hardwick, "Policing paternity: historicising masculinity and sexuality in early-modern France," *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (2015), 645.
[364] Desan, *The Family on Trial*, 182.
[365] While the *déclaration de grossesse*, or pregnancy declaration, is often treated as a legal requirement that women name the father of their child at birth, Desan observes that it was not mandatory, but instead could be used by women to pressure the reluctant father into providing support or to lay the groundwork for a formal paternity suit, or *recherche de paternité*.

Desan understands illegitimacy as "primarily a phenomenon of the working poor" and observes that paternity suits were most often filed by "[s]ervants, seamstresses, and spinners, [who] sought damages, child support, pregnancy expenses, and aid in educating and establishing the as-yet-unborn child in a profession."[366] It is worth emphasizing that this list of claims is almost identical to the list of obligations undertaken by Leroy in the settlement agreement. Jeannette's claim, like metropolitan paternity suits, fit into a socioeconomic framework that privileged marriage as a means of sustaining the family line, creating alliances, and transferring property between families.[367] Whenever possible, metropolitan courts and communities pressured the unmarried parents of illegitimate children into marrying and thus retroactively legitimizing their offspring.[368] In cases like Jeannette's, where marriage was impossible, *mères célibatrices*, or unwed mothers, faced harsh social and economic consequences. In a culture of female honor based on sexuality, the damage to their reputations often ruined their future marriage prospects, thus cutting them out of family emotional and economic networks and depriving them of a critical form of economic security.[369] While colonial anxieties about illegitimacy were mostly directed toward mixed-race children, Jeannette still worried about the potentially far-reaching consequences of her "lost"

[366] Desan, *The Family on Trial*, 181-182.
[367] Desan, *The Family on Trial*, 184.
[368] Hardwick, "Policing paternity," 650-651.
[369] Desan, *The Family on Trial*, 185, notes that often only the combined efforts of a working couple permitted them to survive periods of economic downturn.

honor and exerted legal pressure against Leroy in an attempt to limit the social and economic damage.[370]

In the end, Leroy and Marie Jeannette reached a private settlement that addressed the social and economic concerns of both parties by drawing upon the conventions of metropolitan paternity suits as well as the colonial regime of chattel slavery.
Marie Jeannette was not only a young working-class woman, but more specifically a young *white* working-class woman, navigating the particular labor regime of Cap Français. As such, her claims and the resulting settlement had consequences not only for herself, her son, and Leroy, but also for the enslaved Adelaïde.

The settlement between Leroy and Marie Jeannette forced Adelaïde to move to a new household and navigate a new relationship of domination. Whether she was forcibly relocated from the countryside to the city or moved to a new location within Cap Français, her daily routine was likely upended and her web of family and social ties either stretched or severed completely. The only thing we know for certain about Adelaïde's life before Marie Jeannette became her enslaver is that she had previously been enslaved by another white woman.[371] The racialized legal regime of Cap Français upheld the authority of all slaveowners, men and women alike. However, Jennifer Palmer suggests that shared gender might have "simplified daily interactions and

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[370] Desan, *The Family on Trial*, 191-193, for women's seduction narratives as a way of salvaging reputations by highlighting men's responsibility; leveraging ideas about male and female sexuality/playing up their own powerlessnesss for legal advantage.
[371] Palmer, *Intimate Bonds*, 101, suggests that white women in Cap Français may have been more likely to own women slaves. Marisa J. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).49, finds the same pattern in Bridgetown, Barbados.

relations of authority."[372] If Adelaïde could leverage this gendered connection into a personal bond, it could, just possibly, lead to freedom: white women did not emancipate as many slaves as white men, but when they did, they tended to emancipate women.[373] However, any advantage that Adelaïde managed to negotiate from her new situation pales beside Marie Jeannette's social and economic gains.

Like all white female enslavers, Marie Jeannette gained a degree of social status and a cultural license to exercise authority that she would not have had as an unmarried artisan in France.[374] Urban enslaved women were domestic servants, nursemaids, washerwomen, sex slaves; Marie Jeannette may have exploited Adelaïde's labor to avoid doing work that she saw as dirty or demeaning.[375] Further, as the owner of a female slave, she gained a social remedy for the threat to her sexual reputation. Marisa Fuentes argues that enslaved women's lack of sexual choice relationally reinforced white women's power to exercise sexual agency and claim virtue:

> The privileged position white women acquired through the exchange of enslaved women's bodies resulted in a 'reputation' of their own virtue compared to those of mulatto and black women... White women's honored reputation rested on the subjugation of enslaved women as sexual objects and this reputation was constituent to their ability to commodify slaves and be themselves perceived as in need of protection.[376]

Marie Jeannette's story of seduction raised the issue of choice, as she claimed that she was inappropriately pressured by Leroy. By gaining control over the sexual choices of an enslaved woman, Marie Jeannette stabilized her own reputation.

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[372] Palmer, *Intimate Bonds*, 101.
[373] Palmer, *Intimate Bonds*, 101.
[374] Palmer, *Intimate Bonds*, 121; Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, 74-75.
[375] Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, 96.
[376] Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, 80.

Finally, women reinforced and benefited from slave society through their economic activities.[377] White women actively participated in the urban economy as buyers, sellers, and renters. Within this economy, they sometimes adopted different strategies than men. Jennifer Palmer observes that white women tended to prefer moveable personal property--including human property--over real estate holdings, as the former gave them greater autonomy.[378] Marie Jeannette could have profited from Adelaïde's forced labor in a variety of ways. She might have put Adelaïde to work in her own household; sent her out into the streets as a huckster; rented her out as a laundress; apprenticed her as a seamstress or a hairdresser. Marie Jeannette did not only have the power to exploit Adelaïde as a source of labor, however. To her enslaver, Adelaïde's body and reproductive capacity also represented potential sources of value, to be sold or further exploited.[379]

On its surface, the legal dispute between Leroy and Marie Jeannette--a female apprentice demanding child support from the master who seduced her--could have come straight from the metropolitan archives. On closer inspection, it betrays a much more complicated interplay of metropolitan and colonial concepts. Like apprenticeship contracts for enslaved workers, the legal, social, and economic tangle that connected

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[377] White women in the Caribbean have often been discussed in terms of their cultural role in reinforcing whiteness and upholding slave society. More recent work, including Palmer, *Intimate Bonds*; Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*; Stephanie Jones-Rogers, *They Were Her Property: White Women as Slave Owners in the American South* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019); Cecily Jones, *Engendering Whiteness: White Women and Colonialism in Barbados and North Carolina, 1627-1865* (Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 2017) has pushed back against this exclusively cultural view by also emphasizing white women as economic actors.

[378] Palmer, *Intimate Bonds*, 113. This despite the colonial emphasis on land as a source of wealth.

[379] Recent work on slavery and capitalism in the American South has done an excellent job of illuminating this. See especially Jones-Rogers, *They Were Her* Property; Daina Ramey Berry, *The Price for Their Pound of Flesh: The Value of the Enslaved, from Womb to Grave, in the Building of a Nation* (New York: Random House Inc, 2018).

Leroy, Marie Jeannette, and Adelaïde demonstrates how white retailers and artisans in Cap Français strategically and selectively combined metropolitan and colonial labor regimes.

Cap Français occupied a legal space within the French empire where two very different labor regimes overlapped. Laboring and middling whites who participated in local commerce could thus combine diverse types of labor and practices of labor organization in whatever ways best served their interests. Urban whites strategically bolstered their reputations through guild language while simultaneously incorporating enslaved labor into their business practices.

Middling and laboring whites in Cap Français could easily exploit enslaved labor because the city was a confluence point for French Atlantic trade. As a port of entry for hundreds of thousands of enslaved Africans, le Cap made enslaved labor accessible and ubiquitous. The economy of urban slavery, which rested on the legalization of chattel slavery under the terms of the *Code Noir*, enabled white retailers and artisans to exploit enslaved Africans and Afro descendants as laborers and as moveable "property."

Cap Français was also unusual for its relatively unregulated free labor. Middling and laboring whites who were familiar with the corporate structures that dominated the metropolitan world of work took advantage of their absence in the colony. Cap Français operated as a sort of large overseas *lieu privilégiée*, or privileged economic zone, a liberalized work environment that was not subject to guild regulations or oversight. These

quasi-"free market" conditions meant that entrepreneurial whites faced no barriers to entering local commerce and no formal restrictions on calling themselves "masters."

Each of the legal systems that structured urban labor, the *Code Noir* and the lack of corporate privilege, offered specific benefits to middling whites in search of colonial wealth and status. However, the real advantage of these two systems was their practical compatibility. Not only did chattel slavery and corporate respectability function smoothly side by side, but white "masters" could selectively deploy tenets of corporate organization to support their authority over enslaved workers, and vice versa.

Middling and laboring whites in Cap Français operated at the intersection of multiple value systems that did not just overlap, but gained strength through their entanglement. As white migrants from France tried to get their social and economic bearings in urban commerce, they deployed and improvised concepts of credit, race, and mastery. This created a sort of accretion of forms of social and economic assessment both old and new, in which claims of whiteness, creditworthiness, and slave ownership reinforced each other.

In eighteenth-century accounts of the Haitian Revolution and in subsequent histories, the middling white commercial world of Cap Français drops out of sight. On one level this overshadowing makes perfect sense. The slave revolt that began on Saint-Domingue's Plaine du Nord in 1791 and the near-simultaneous uprising of the free people of color in the colony's West Province ultimately had a much greater impact on the course of local and global history. However, this is not the whole story. In the following chapter, I look to French revolutionary discourse and later historiography to tease out a thread of

how the middling and laboring whites of Cap Français were transformed into the so-called *petits blancs*.

CHAPTER FIVE

PETITS BLANCS: THE REVOLUTIONARY CONSTRUCTION OF A SOCIO-RACIAL CATEGORY

As the preceding chapters have shown, French migrants who found a foothold among the laboring and middling population of Cap Français did so by manipulating a complex tangle of identities, resources, interactions, and affiliations. Alongside their racist insistence on the superiority of whiteness, many among the middling urban population could claim personal status and respectability as small property owners, masters of both free and enslaved laborers, and members of credit networks. Historians have used the term *petits blancs* as a catchphrase to refer to this group of middling and laboring whites, in a way that flattens and distorts their place in Dominguan society. How, then, did this group get reduced to the vague category of *petits blancs*, as they appear in histories of Old Regime Saint-Domingue and the Haitian Revolution from the nineteenth through the twenty-first centuries?

In this chapter, I argue that a series of debates in the French National Assembly in May of 1791 represent a key origin point for current historiographical conceptions of the *petits blancs*. Like any descriptive social category, the imagined referent of *petits blancs* has undergone a complex series of shifts, depending on time and context. I do not intend to trace a clear or consistent throughline for the evolution of the term from its pre-revolutionary origins to its most recent usage. Instead, I focus on resonances between the meanings of *petits blancs* that appear in the May 1791 debates, and those that appear in recent historical literature.

From May 11-15, 1791, the National Assembly debated whether free men of color should be granted citizenship rights and included in colonial assemblies. This debate was one of the first occasions when the socio-racial category *petits blancs* surfaced in Atlantic revolutionary discourse as more than a passing reference. Over several days of debate delegates both in favor of and opposed to free colored citizenship referred to the *petits blancs* in order to explain contemporary events in Saint-Domingue and to support their arguments about the limits of citizenship. In the process, they set out some of the first recorded definitions of the socio-racial category. The *petits blancs* of Saint-Domingue emerge most clearly as negative reflections of the colony's free people of color. Instead of the virtues of social stability, property ownership, and military loyalty that marked free people of color as good potential citizens, the *petits blancs* existed at the margins of colonial society, disorderly and impoverished, ready to support the first counter-revolutionary power to appeal to their greed and racism. These attributes have persisted in the historiography of Saint-Domingue and the Haitian Revolution, where they often appear as an offhand, generalizing description.

The first part of this chapter traces the term *petits blancs* as it appears in the May 1791 citizenship debate. It describes the definition of *petits blancs* that crystallized during this debate and situates it in several overlapping contexts. This section argues that the meaning of *petits blancs* as a revolutionary socio-racial category was shaped by the behind-the-scenes operations of the National Assembly's Colonial Committee, the broad, ongoing revolutionary project of social categorization as a way to make claims

about who represented the "national will", and, crucially, the ongoing reality of racist behavior among middling and laboring whites in Saint-Domingue.

The remainder of the chapter considers how, and why, the category of *petits blancs* surfaces in later historical writing about the Haitian Revolution and the Old Regime slave society that gave rise to it. As historians have worked to make sense of the causes, contradictions, and contingencies of the Revolution, some have used the term *petits blancs* as if it denoted a social group with fixed characteristics. This usage reflects a historiographical move to understand revolutionary engagement as driven by a more complex set of interests than racial affinity alone. However, because the current meaning of *petits blancs* owes more to revolutionary rhetoric than to lived reality in Saint-Domingue, the term distorts, rather than enhances, our image of the fractures and contradictions within the colony's nominally "white" population.

Taken together, the two parts of this chapter demonstrate that the socio-racial category *petits blancs* has roots in lived realities of racialized conflict as well as a revolutionary project of political claims. Nevertheless, the term is of limited use in describing the social and cultural complexities that underpinned and shaped "whiteness" in daily life in Saint-Domingue before and during the Haitian Revolution. By creating a generalized image of a marginal, disorderly population, *petits blancs* draws attention away from middling and laboring whites' deep engagement with and commitment to the system of slavery.

The creation of a revolutionary socio-racial category

Beginning in 1789, the French Revolution caused a fundamental shift in the structures of social order and political power that had governed Old Regime France. Over the course of several months, the creation of the National Assembly, its abolition of traditional privileges, and the Declaration of the Rights of Man all reframed political power as legitimately vested in the nation as a whole, not only with the monarchy. As a part of this shift, the idea of citizenship was transformed. Under the Old Regime, citizenship, often associated with urban *bourgeois* status, typically connoted a set of privileges, among them the right to marry, to conduct business, and to bequeath property to one's designated heirs.[380] During the early 1790s, citizenship gained a political dimension: the right to be included among the representatives of the nation, to vote and to participate in the business of government. The question of who counted as a citizen, however, remained a subject of fierce contention.

When the members of the National Assembly convened on May 11, 1791, to determine whether free men of color qualified for citizenship, they took up an ongoing metropolitan debate and extended it to encompass France's overseas colonies. The French revolutionary principle that government and laws should reflect the "national will" begged the question of who, exactly, should have the right of representing the nation as a citizen. As the Assembly engaged in the contentious work of creating what would be

[380] For more detail about Old Regime understandings of citizenship, see Gail Bossenga, "Rights and Citizens in the Old Regime," *French Historical Studies* Vol. 20, No. 2 (Spring 1997): 217-243; also Dominique Rogers, "Les libres de couleur dans les capitales de Saint-Domingue: fortune, mentalités et intégration à la fin de l'Ancien Régime (1776-1789)" (PhD diss., Université Michel Montaigne, Bordeaux III, 1999), 367, 384-385.

the Constitution of 1791, the drafters confronted an unprecedented set of questions: If sovereignty was to be shared with the nation, who qualified as a citizen, entitled to a share? What were the legitimate forms for political participation and representation? Influenced by the early revolutionary atmosphere of turmoil and experiment, many different social groups put forth public arguments for their inclusion in the nation as citizens.[381]

These new political claims often rested on projects of revolutionary social taxonomy, as aspiring citizens positioned themselves, relative to other categories of people, as productive, virtuous, and otherwise worthy of political representation in accordance with revolutionary principles. Revolutionaries creatively redefined and built on existing language as part of their larger efforts to delineate the relationship between state and citizen, and to advance their own interests. Historian William Sewell, for example, has demonstrated how the term *citoyen* gained a feminine form, *citoyenne*, as part of ongoing debates about women's' citizenship rights.[382] Other familiar and politically charged terms, including "aristocrat" and "Hercules" underwent similar processes of contestation and redefinition.[383]

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[381] For more about the significance of revolutionary citizenship, as well as processes of revolutionary claims-making and exclusion, see Bossenga, "Rights and Citizens in the Old Regime"; Dale Van Kley, ed., *The French Idea of Freedom: The Old Regime and the Declaration of Rights of 1789* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).
[382] William H. Sewell, Jr., "*Le citoyen/la citoyenne*: Activity, Passivity, and the Revolutionary Concept of Citizenship," in *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture* Vol. II, ed. Colin Lucas, 105-124 (Oxford and New York: Pergamon Press, 1988).
[383] Albert Soboul, *The Sans-culottes: The Popular Movement and Revolutionary Government, 1793-1794*, trans. Remy Inglis Hall (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1908), 6-7; Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1984), 95-126.

Like "aristocrat," *petits blancs* had a pre-revolutionary history of usage and meaning. The enslaved population of France's Caribbean colonies coined the term to point to the internal divisions that belied the supposed unity, and superiority, of white society. Attentive social observers by necessity, slaves recognized that the privileges of whiteness were tied not only to skin color, but to possession of wealth and property. In contrast to the "*grands blancs*" or "*Blancs blancs*" who owned Saint-Domingue's vast sugar estates, the "*petits blancs*" could not claim the property that would make them, in the colonial hierarchy, truly white.[384] White colonists and European travelers casually repeated the term in their writings, describing it as a common colonial usage.[385]

The May 1791 debates in the National Assembly capture the category *petits blancs* as it moved into the metropolitan revolutionary lexicon, its meaning being contested in the process. Some of the delegates who mentioned the *petits blancs* betrayed a degree of discomfort with the term and an awareness of its tenuous, constructed nature. The Physiocrat Pierre Samuel Du Pont de Nemours used the term "petits blancs", then retreated, by way of an awkward joke, to explain who he was talking about: "you know, these aren't people who are three or four feet tall..."[386] Some

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[384] Charles Frostin, *Les révoltes blanches à Saint-Domingue aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles (Haiti avant 1789)* (Paris: L'école, 1975), 71; Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 35.

[385] For example: M. L. E. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie française de l'isle de Saint-Domingue, Avec des Observations générales sur sa Population, sur le Caractère et les Moeurs de ses divers Habitants; sur son Climat, sa Culture, ses Productions, son Administration, &c. &c*. Tome premier. A Philadelphie, 1797, I: 33; Michel Étienne Descourtilz, *Voyages d'un naturaliste, et ses observations,* 3 vols. (Paris: 1809), 3:380.

[386] *Archives Parlementaires de 1787 à 1860, Recueil complet des débats législatifs et politiques des chambres françaises, imprimé par ordre du sénat et de la chambre des députés, sous la direction de M.J. Mavidal, chef du bureau des procès-verbaux, de l'expédition des lois, des impressions et distributions de la chambre des députés, et de M.E. Laurent, bibliothécaire-adjoint de la chambre des députés*, Première

other speakers prefaced their remarks with a disclaimer that *petits blancs* was an imprecise descriptor that originated elsewhere. Delegates introduced them as "the class... who is called, by way of abuse, in the colonies, the petits blancs," or "those who are called the petits blancs."[387] The French construction "on appelle" or "on appelait", which I have translated here by using the passive voice, indicates a displacing of responsibility: the expression *petits blancs* originates with an unspecified, colonial "someone".

Other participants in the debates, particularly the members and associates of the National Assembly's Colonial Committee, were more familiar with colonial socio-racial categories, including *petits blancs*. The Committee was formed in August 1789 by a group of planters and colonial merchants "prepared to do anything to prevent the application of the Declaration of the Rights of Man in the colonies."[388] In service of this objective, they sought to control what information about the colonies reached the Assembly as a whole. Particularly, they worked to keep any internal disagreement beneath the notice of their opponents, the delegates affiliated with the Amis des Noirs. As Antoine Barnave, reporter for the Colonial Committee, put it, the internal discussions of the Committee should remain "a family secret."[389]

The Committee's internal disagreement about how to categorize the colonial white population represented one such "family affair." Between October 1790 and June

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série (1787 à 1799), accessed through the French Revolutionary Digital Archive, https://frda.stanford.edu/en/ap, 27 October 2018. Tome 26, p. 49.

[387] *Archives Parlementaires*, 25: 758; 26: 5.

[388] Manuel Covo, "Le Comité des colonies. Une institution au service de la 'famille coloniale'? (1789-1793)," *La Révolution française* 3 (2012), 1-20, p. 2.

[389] Covo, "Le Comité des colonies," 12.

1791, the Committee engaged in a protracted debate over how the colonies should determine active citizenship, with an eye to maintaining colonial autonomy and the "colonial system" of slavery and racial hierarchy.[390] Barnave believed that it was necessary to involve all whites who could pay a direct tax, "on the supposition that they at least had property in slaves, and that masters would be interested in maintaining [the existing] order."[391] Pierre-Victor Malouet, a former colonial administrator, thought this minimal qualification threatened to admit whites whose status should exclude them from public affairs. A proposed property requirement of 15,000 *livres* seemed dangerously low to him, particularly in the case of Saint-Domingue. "Who doesn't have that much?" he asked.[392] Moreau de Saint-Méry retorted that 15,000 *livres* was actually a very high bar: if that amount represented the line between wealth and poverty, then in his home of Martinique there were plenty of "poor" men of good character. For other members of the Colonial Committee, the need to maintain the color line was the most important consideration. Jean-François Reynaud de Villeverd, who had spent years as a military commander in Saint-Domingue, thought that in order to "preserve the dignity of color, the *petits blancs* should be excluded [from citizenship], because the slaves hold them in contempt."[393] An unofficial Committee member, La Galissonnière, used a similar

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[390] Covo, "Le Comité des colonies," 13-14, for a more detailed account of this debate.
[391] "...parce qu'elle suppos[ait] une propriété au moins en esclaves et que le maître [étair] intéressé au maintien de l'ordre." Covo, "Le Comité des colonies," 14.
[392] Covo, "Le Comité des colonies," 14. For background information about Malouet: Edna Hindie Lemay, *Dictionnaire des Constituants: 1789-1791,* 2 vols. (Paris: Universitas, 1991), II: 628.
[393] "...conserver la dignité de la couleur, [il fallait] repousser les petits blancs car les esclaves les mépris[ai]ent." Covo, "Le Comité des colonies," 14. For background information about Reynaud: Lemay, *Dictionnaire des Constituants*, II: 804.

argument to demand the exclusion of free people of color: "it is necessary to maintain the aristocracy of color in the Colonies."[394]

While the members and associates of the Colonial Committee differed as to how the colonial social hierarchy should be ordered, they agreed that in order to maintain slavery, some form of privilege-based social order must be upheld. Because this conviction went against the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the National Assembly's project of abolishing metropolitan privileges, the Colonial Committee sought to maintain colonial autonomy at all costs. In the May 1791 debates, then, whenever members or affiliates of the Colonial Committee made arguments around the socio-racial category *petits blancs*, they had the underlying political motive of demonstrating that the colonies were a unique society that required their own form of government.[395]

The May 1791 debates were not the first time the National Assembly deliberated about whether or not the Declaration of the Rights of Man extended to free people of color. As early as summer 1789, white plantation owners, who organized their efforts in Paris through the Club Massiac, argued against free people of color and their supporters in the Société des Amis des Noirs. In 1790, the short-lived rebellion and subsequent dramatic execution of Vincent Ogé, a free man of color from Saint-

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[394] "...qu'il fallait conserver aux Colonies l'aristocratie de la couleur." Covo, "Le Comité des colonies," 14.
[395] David Geggus, "Racial Equality, Slavery, and Colonial Secession during the Constituent Assembly," *The American Historical Review* Vol. 94, No. 5 (December 1989), provides important background and detail on the "colonial question" in the French Revolution. He understands the matter of free colored rights and representation as one of "three broad issues: self-government for France's overseas possessions, civil rights for their free colored populations, and the abolition of the slave trade and slavery itself" (1290).

Domingue, drew widespread attention and gave the question of the political and social status of free people of color a new urgency for metropolitan legislators.[396]

However, in May 1791, for the first time, the members of the National Assembly brought the *petits blancs* into their debate about the political rights of free people of color. In the process, they produced some of the first recorded definitions of *petits blancs* as a category. The free people of color constituted an intermediate category in colonial society. Their representatives and allies argued that they qualified for political representation on the basis of their property and contributions to the state, but their detractors among the colonial merchant and planter lobby argued that they should be excluded on racial grounds, in order to preserve the "color line". As the two sides argued over which qualities should determine citizenship, the *petits blancs* served as the perfect rhetorical inverse: another intermediate social category, propertyless but possessed of the racial privilege of whiteness. Over the course of the May debates, the socio-racial category *petits blancs* was constructed as a foil to the free people of color, its members characterized as economically unproductive, socially disorderly, and above all, fiercely attached to the racial privilege of whiteness.

As speakers deployed different characterizations of the *petits blancs* to advance claims about which colonial social categories were deserving of political representation,

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[396] For richer detail about the Société des Amis des Noirs, early debates with the Club Massiac, and the Ogé rebellion, see: Jeremy D. Popkin, "Saint-Domingue, Slavery, and the Origins of the French Revolution," in *From Deficit to Deluge: The Origins of the French Revolution*, ed. Thomas E. Kaiser and Dale K. Van Kley (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011): 220-248; Florence Gauthier, *L'Aristocratie de l'épiderme: Le combat de la Société des Citoyens de Couleur, 1789-1791* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2007); Yves Benot, *La révolution française et la fin des colonies* (Paris: Éditions la découverte, 1989); Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848* (London and New York: Verso, 1988; Rogers, "Les libres de couleur," 377-381; Geggus, "Racial Equality, Slavery, and Colonial Secession," 1302, attests to the influence of the Ogé affair.

they persistently depicted the *petits blancs* as propertyless and economically unproductive. Advocates for the free people of color used this negative image to their advantage, to reinforce a contrary image of free people of color as prosperous landowners and taxpayers and to complicate demographic arguments about the relative numbers of whites and free people of color in the colony. In doing so, they employed criteria for political inclusion that had been set out in previous revolutionary debates about who should play a role in the nation, particularly Abbé Sieyes's claims on behalf of the Third Estate.[397]

When Sieyès himself briefly intervened in the debates over free colored representation, he drew the Assembly's attention to the qualifications for participation in political assemblies that had been decreed on March 28, 1790: at least 25 years of age, an established residence, property ownership, and taxpayer status.[398] Following this legitimating logic, Julien Raimond, speaking on behalf of the free people of color of Saint-Domingue, likewise emphasized the importance of property ownership. He lauded the colony's free people of color as landed proprietors, "attached to the soil."[399] The *petits blancs*, by contrast, were "attached to nothing, except to harm the white planters." This claim drew on longstanding Old Regime associations between land ownership and

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[397] Déborah Cohen, *La nature du peuple: Les formes de l'imaginaire social (XVIIIe-XXIe siècles)* (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 2010), beginning on 159, traces the development of pragmatic depictions of "le peuple" in terms of producers and consumers as part of the Physiocrats' discussions of political economy in the latter third of the eighteenth century. For economic argument in Sieyes, see William Sewell, *A Rhetoric of Bourgeois Revolution: The Abbé Sieyes and What Is the Third Estate?* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2012), 57-58. Also, see Michael Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation in Eighteenth-Century France* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 283-296, for the revolutionary definition of citizenship in terms of economic contribution and utility.

[398] *Archives Parlementaires*, 26: 15.

[399] *Archives Parlementaires*, 26: 67. John Garrigus, *Before Haiti*, "Proving Free Colored Virtue," 195-225, for more detailed analysis of arguments in favor of free people of color.

social and political status.[400] In the colonial context, the designation "propriétaire" also signaled large-scale slave ownership and indicated a personal investment in maintaining a stable slave society. Raimond saw shared proprietor status as creating a natural alliance of interest between white planters and the free people of color as "a class who is attached to the soil and who has an interest like them, that of possessing slaves, and so of restraining them."[401] He quickly moved to put the *petits blancs* outside of this shared interest: "Is this [the case for] the class of *petits blancs*, Messieurs? Men without possessions, who do not belong to the soil in any way, can they be preferred over men born on this soil, over free men, over propertied men, over taxpayers, finally over useful men?"[402]

Ownership of property, whether in land or enslaved labor, thus took on new revolutionary associations of productive contribution to national wealth, even as it retained earlier connotations of status and stability. After making the above argument on May 14, Julien Raimond submitted a letter to the National Assembly the following day that reiterated his point. In the letter, he asked that if the Assembly chose to leave the question of free colored rights to be decided by the colonies, they should add an amendment to the decree giving the free men of color permission to emigrate from the colony with their fortunes.[403] Raimond was not the only speaker to contrast free people of color, who were taxpayers, with *petits blancs*, who were not. Jean-Denis Lanjuinais, a

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[400] Paul Cheney, *Cul de Sac: Patrimony, Capitalism, and Slavery in French Saint-Domingue* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), offers some useful background on this association, and how it carried over from metropolitan to colonial society.
[401] *Archives Parlementaires*, 26: 69.
[402] *Archives Parlementaires*, 26: 69.
[403] *Archives Parlementaires*, 26: 89.

founding member of the organization which later became the Paris Jacobin club, responded to the assertion that *petits blancs* sought to impede free colored political rights by saying that it was ridiculous for "those who are called petits blancs" to have any stake in the debate: "What! These are the men who are not active citizens according to our Constitution, who are not proprietors, who do not pay any taxes."[404]

The question of economic utility also had a demographic dimension, which emerged as speakers argued over whether the colonial population should be assessed in total numbers or as numbers of taxpayers.[405] Raimond approached the demographic question directly, citing census figures from the Bureau of the Marine in 1788 that divided the free population of Saint-Domingue into 30,000 whites and 27-28,000 free people of color. Raimond argued that even if whites dominated in total numbers, "those called the petits blancs" should be regarded as a category distinct from the rest of the free population.[406] Médéric Louis Élie Moreau de Saint-Méry, speaking as usual in the interests of the white planter class, contested Raimond's demographic claims. He also referenced the 1788 census, but gave different figures: 27,717 whites, compared to 21,808 free people of color. A delegate seated on the left (and thus likely a supporter of the extension of political rights to free people of color) then called out, "How many petits blancs?" Moreau gave several unhelpful answers, insisting that "the whites who were

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[404] *Archives Parlementaires*, 26: 5. For a brief background on Lanjuinais: *Biographical Anecdotes of the Founders of the French Republic, and of other Eminent Characters, who have Distinguished Themselves in the Progress of the Revolution* (London: Printed for R. Phillips and sold by Mr. Johnson, St. Paul's Church-Yard, and Mr. Debrett, Piccadilly, 1797).

[405] This demographic debate, rooted in an understanding of legitimate representation through contribution to national productivity and finances, reiterated some of the questions that arose in 1789 when representatives from Saint-Domingue sought admission to the Estates General.

[406] *Archives Parlementaires*, 26: 68.

included in the census of Saint-Domingue are white taxpayers; if there are others, they should be added to my first number." After being pressed further, he conceded that the census included "2,000 or 2,500 domestic servants, because they have some possessions."[407]

As members of the National Assembly opposed the *petits blancs* to the free people of color in economic terms, their emphasis on possession and productivity supported a closely related social and moral critique of the *petits blancs* on the basis of their supposed lack of social stability or attachment to the colony. Speakers repeatedly described the *petits blancs* in terms familiar from negative depictions of marginal and mobile populations under the Old Regime.[408] "Men without laws or morals," the Abbé Gregoire called them; "A mass of people without *patrie*, without laws, without morals, given to the most shameful debauches and the lowest occupations," Du Pont de Nemours elaborated.[409] By highlighting "the state of anarchy which reigns among them," the speakers identified the *petits blancs* as a group that stood threateningly outside the bounds of ordered society, in a way that made them ineligible for any rights of political decision-making over it.

In the context of Saint-Domingue's particular history, these characterizations of the *petits blancs* as immoral and anarchic recall the disorderly population of

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[407] *Archives Parlementaires*, 26: 71.
[408] For more detail about negative connotations of moblity: Arlette Farge and Jacques Revel, trans, Claudia Miéville, *The Vanishing Children of Paris: Rumor and Politics Before the French Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), 30-33; Daniel Roche, *Humeurs vagabondes. De la circulation des hommes et de l'utilité des voyages* (Paris: Fayard, 2003); Olwen Hufton, *The Poor of Eighteenth-Century France, 1750-1789* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974; Cohen, *La nature du peuple*, particularly pp. 54-57.
[409] *Archives Parlementaires*, 25: 737; 26: 49.

buccaneers, or *flibustiers*, who numbered among the first settlers of the colony. Julien Raimond played upon this association to strengthen his case that the free people of color deserved political rights due to their role as guarantors of colonial security. Raimond chose not to elaborate at length on the free people of color's history of military service and their prominent role in the colony's rural police force, the *maréchaussée*.[410] Instead, he concentrated on their status as settled proprietors with a material stake in keeping Saint-Domingue politically stable and attached to France. By contrast, the *petits blancs* not only failed to protect the colony from danger, but could actually exacerbate it, as they shared interests with corsairs who might attack the coast:

> These petits blancs are so dangerous, that the colonists, present here, could tell you that in time of war, they fear them more than the enemy. Some of these whites, without possessions, live on the shore and support themselves by fishing, their only occupation; a rough cabin, a canoe, some nets, are all their property. In wartime, what will happen? When the corsairs arrive, not to attack openly, but to pillage the colony, these petits blancs, as soon as they see them from afar, will get in their canoes, and, on the pretext of going fishing, will conspire with them and tell them: "Come tonight to a certain plantation, and on a given signal, we will help you plunder it."[411]

Raimond thus combined rights claims with a strategic argument about colonial security by calling to mind Saint-Domingue's piratical, lawless past at a moment when France faced the threat of war with anti-revolutionary powers in Europe.

By characterizing the *petits blancs* as disorderly libertines, supporters of free colored citizenship reinforced the shared interests and social position of the free people of color and the white planter elite. The colonial slaveowning elite had a reputation, in pre-revolutionary discourse, for dubious morals, material excesses, and an attachment

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[410] See John D. Garrigus, "Opportunist or Patriot? Julien Raimond (1744-1801) and the Haitian Revolution," in *Slavery and Abolition* Vol. 28, No. 1 (April 2007): 1-21, for a detailed analysis of Raimond's case for free colored citizenship.
[411] *Archives Parlementaires*, 26: 67-68.

to their personal prerogatives as masters that threatened to challenge royal authority.[412] During the May 1791 debates, these broadly "colonial" problems of greed, immorality, and disloyalty were attached specifically to the *petits blancs*. This enabled defenders of the free people of color to displace potential criticism from the free people of color themselves and from the white planters with whom they claimed a kinship of interests.

The pattern of smoothing over colonial tensions and instabilities by displacing undesirable characteristics onto the *petits blancs* also partially explains claims that *petits blancs* were uniquely and immovably prejudiced against the free people of color. Emphasizing the problem of *petit-blanc* racism benefited both free colored and white plantation owners by deflecting attention from the problem of slavery.[413] Further, it made the ongoing revolutionary disorder in Saint-Domingue into a *petit-blanc* problem, one that could be solved by a legal system that recognized and accommodated colonial distinctiveness. Finally, at a moment when Dominguan whites faced widespread criticism as "aristocrats of the skin," casting the *petits blancs* as reactionary defenders of white privilege enabled speakers who represented the interests of white planters to rehabilitate their image and to leverage the possibility of alliance with free people of color for their own political ends.

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[412] For eighteenth-century critiques of colonial excess, see: Doris Garraway, *The Libertine Colony: Creolization in the Early French Caribbean* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005), and Yvonne Fabella, "Redeeming the 'Character of the Creoles': Whiteness, Gender and Creolization in Pre-Revolutionary Saint Domingue," *Journal of Historical Sociology* Vol. 23, No. 1 (March 2010): 40-72; Gene E. Ogle, "'The Eternal Power of Reason' and 'The Superiority of Whites': Hilliard d'Auberteuil's Colonial Enlightenment," *French Colonial History* 3, "Idea and Action in French Colonization" (2003). For power struggle between colonial plantation owners and metropolitan administrators: Malick Ghachem, "Stop the Course of these Cruelties," Chapter 4 of *The Old Regime and the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 167-210.

[413] Garrigus, "Opportunist or Patriot?" 2.

On May 12, Antoine Barnave tacitly supported the long-term objectives of the Colonial Committee as he made strategic use of the category *petits blancs* to argue that the decision of whether or not to acknowledge free people of color as citizens with political rights should be made in the colonies. Those who spoke in favor of leaving decisions about citizenship in the hands of colonial legislatures generally did so in the hope that the colonies would oppose free colored political inclusion. Barnave used the *petits blancs* to raise a different possibility. He began by arguing that not all colonists were equally prejudiced against the free people of color. The most deeply rooted prejudices were not held by "the colonists who enjoy an easy fortune," but by "the least fortunate class of whites... the petits blancs, among the whites who populate the cities."[414] The colonial assemblies, which convened in the most densely populated port cities, were thus forced to deliberate on free colored rights while surrounded by a volatile population of urban whites whom they knew to be hostile to any attempts at inclusion. However, Barnave claimed, if the colonial assemblies were relocated to smaller, less populous towns, the prosperous, better-educated white proprietors of the countryside would be unconstrained by outside influence, and less prejudiced opinions would likely prevail. He left unspoken the fact that these more remote assemblies would be more easily dominated by the supposedly less-prejudiced rural planters. Barnave thus instrumentalized the *petits blancs* to argue for white planter authority and colonial autonomy while still dangling the possibility of political rights for free people of color.

[414] *Archives Parlementaires*, 25: 758.

Speakers who characterized the petits blancs in terms of their marked and persistent racial prejudice also positioned them outside the bounds of legitimate political participation through the conceptual linkage between white and aristocratic privilege. Much as Sieyès argued that the privileged nobility should be excluded from political representation, some speakers held that the intransigent, self-styled colonial "nobility" should also be ineligible for citizenship.[415] Du Pont de Nemours drew this connection between nobility and racial prejudice most directly when he stated, "[i]t is this little class of *petits blancs* who, in America, is much more proud of its white nobility ("noblesse blanche") than are the true colonists, the richest proprietors."[416] He played to his audience, and won some laughter and applause, as he finished, "...just as in France, the sons of royal secretaries are the most overbearing *seigneurs*." The *secrétaires du roi* to whom Du Pont de Nemours alluded were a familiar French social type, widely detested during the Old Regime. Because they purchased their titles, heir critics accused them of "weakening" the nobility by receiving the privilege of *noblesse* without doing anything to deserve it.[417] Likewise, in Du Pont de Nemours's comparison, the *petits blancs*' "aristocracy of the skin" was particularly egregious because unmerited.

For Julien Raimond, depicting the *petits blancs* as the class most hostile to the free people of color provided a way to argue for political representation on the basis of revolutionary principles without foreclosing the possibility of an identification of interests with the white colonial elite. Raimond situated his remarks to the National Assembly in

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[415] Sewell, *A Rhetoric of Bourgeois Revolution*, 145.
[416] *Archives Parlementaires*, 26: 49.
[417] David D. Bien, "Manufacturing Nobles: The Chancelleries in France to 1789," *The Journal of Modern History* Vol. 61, no. 3 (September 1998): 445-486.

the context of his ongoing efforts, since 1782, to improve the social position of the free people of color through appeals to colonial administrators.[418] Beginning in 1789, he used this project of social reform to undergird his calls for political representation, as promised by the revolutionary language of rights. In pamphlets printed in 1789 and 1790, he contrasted the free people of color's revolutionary aspirations to equality with the colonial realities of discrimination that they regularly faced. In these earlier writings, although he did not name the *petits blancs*, he argued that only a part of the white population treated the free people of color with open animosity. Even so, colonial administrators, however sympathetic, had failed to ameliorate their treatment in any lasting way. The same was true of the representative assemblies established in the colony since the beginning of the Revolution.[419] Raimond thus claimed that free people of color should have the right to participate in assemblies and elect their own representatives on the principle of the general will: the white-dominated colonial assemblies lacked either the inclination or the ability to represent the interests of the free people of color, and therefore a new system of representation was needed.[420]

In his speech to the National Assembly in 1791, Raimond named the *petits blancs* specifically as the main source of everyday discrimination and acts of violence in

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[418] *Archives Parlementaires*, 26: 67. Garrigus, "Opportunist or Patriot?" 4-6 for more information about Raimond's political projects in the 1780s.
[419] Julien Raimond, "Observations adressées à l'Assemblée Nationale, par un député des colons amériquains," 1789, accessed through Gallica: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k54615279/f4.item.r=julien%20raimond#; Julien Raimond, "Julien Raimond, "Réclamations adressés à l'Assemblée Nationale, par les personnes de Couleur, Propriétaires et Cultivateurs de la Colonie Françoise de Saint-Domingue," 1790, accessed through Gallica: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5785235b?rk=150215;2.
[420] Raimond, "Réclamations adressés à l'Assemblée Nationale," 8.

Saint-Domingue. He described the tangible, widespread consequences of letting the *petits blancs* act on their prejudice, without any legal restraint:

> Prejudice gives them the means, not only to injure us in our persons, but to usurp our possessions; because he who has the possibility to offend and attack a man with impunity will soon be master of his property. He has only to say this: "I will attack you wherever I meet you, I will even go so far as to beat you. Oh yes, if you dare to show any sign of discontent, I will have you condemned in court."[421]

This argument left room for rapprochement with the colonial white elite, as Raimond testified to a metropolitan audience that they were not responsible for the worst excesses of racial prejudice. His argument thus again deflected criticism from the white planters, giving the impression that they themselves were not racist--they had simply been unable to constrain the prejudices of the *petits blancs.* Further, Raimond explained *petit blanc* enmity for the free people of color as a reaction to the latter group's cooperation with the colonial white elite. "[T]he mulattoes, the quarteroons, the tierceroons generally like the whites," he said. "They only permit themselves to hate those who have done them a great deal of wrong."[422] Here he alluded to the *petits blancs* who, in this account, became implacable enemies of the free people of color in the early 1780s, because then-Governor Bellecombe was "revolted" by the prevailing treatment of the free people of color, "a class whose utility he recognized," and put measures in place that "contained the petits blancs" from offering insults with impunity.[423]

It is crucial to recognize, here, that Julien Raimond was not only exercising his political and rhetorical talents, but also offering an accurate depiction of racist behavior

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[421] *Archives Parlementaires*, 26: 68.
[422] *Archives Parlementaires*, 26: 68.
[423] *Archives Parlementaires*, 26: 68.

by Dominguan whites before the revolution. The white population in Saint-Domingue, including but not limited to laboring and middling whites, engaged in sometimes-violent displays of white privilege, both before and during the French and Haitian Revolutions. Despite its purported message of liberty and equality, the colonial revolution both opened new avenues for social and political unrest and made whiteness, as a form of social capital, even more potentially valuable than it had been before.

In the early years of the colonial revolution, from 1789 to 1791, the laboring and middling white population of Cap Français eagerly followed and participated in revolutionary events. Beginning in September 1789, news of the storming of the Bastille and the dramatic upheaval that followed provoked heated responses throughout the colony. "At the Comédie, in the street, everywhere, people spoke of politics," historian Dominique Roger explains.[424] The nineteenth-century Haitian historian Thomas Madiou characterizes the "petits blancs" as the most revolutionary segment of the colonial white population. He argues that the revolution appealed to their resentment of the white elite, as an opportunity to overthrow colonial administrators and lay claim to the wealth of the planters, "who they treated as aristocrats."[425] On the other hand, Madiou emphasizes that even the most revolutionary whites were determined to maintain the system of slavery and alarmed by rumors that the abolition of slavery was imminent.[426]

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[424] Rogers, "Les libres de couleur," 374-375; Jeremy D. Popkin, *You Are All Free: The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery* (Cambridge, U.K., and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), especially chapters 2 and 3, for revolutionary sentiment in Cap Français.
[425] Thomas Madiou, *Histoire d'Haiti*, 2 vols. (Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie de Jh. Courtois, 1847), I:33-34; Beaubrun Ardouin, *Études sur l'histoire d'Haïti, suivies de la vie du Général J.-M. Borgella* (Paris: Dezobry et E. Magdeleine, Lib.-Éditeurs, 1853), I:109-110.
[426] Madiou, *Histoire d'Haiti*, I:36; Rogers, "Les libres de couleur," 374-375, for rumors of abolition.

Madiou relates a story that captures the anti-administrative fervor of laboring and middling whites, but also reveals how easily that revolutionary sentiment could be channeled into a violent defense of slavery. In early October of 1789, he writes, the "petits blancs" of Cap Français spoke and agitated against "the high colonial aristocracy, which is to say, the powerful functionaries."[427] Their leader, "an adventurer named Chesnau newly arrived from France," publicly denounced the Intendant, Barbé-Marbois, as "an aristocrat, determined enemy of the revolution." When the so-called revolutionaries resolved to march to Port-au-Prince to capture the intendant, the colonel of the Régiment du Cap intervened. He instead led them out across the Plaine du Nord to put down a nonexistent slave revolt. The story here turns into a bitter farce: the whites of Cap Français armed and equipped themselves as if for a long campaign and flooded out across the plain, only to find the slave *ateliers* bent to their ordinary work. Frustrated, hot, and tired, the would-be heroes returned to Cap Français, "driving before them and whipping one unfortunate slave who they had snatched away from an estate and who was, they said, the leader of the revolt." This whole expedition, of course, accomplished nothing except, Madiou claimed, "to awaken in the souls of the slaves the sentiment of liberty."

The white population began revolutionary agitation in Cap Français earlier than in Port-au-Prince, although the West Province eventually proved to be the epicenter for laboring and middling white aggression. Dominque Rogers notes that between September and November 1789, "the young whites of le Cap were particularly

[427] Madiou, *Histoire d'Haiti*, I:36.

active."[428] They hurried to wear revolutionary cockades and participate in revolutionary gatherings, but also to exclude the city's free colored population from engaging with the revolution on the same terms. In October 1789, the free people of color of Cap Français were granted permission to wear the cockade, but only when "in uniform and on occasions of service."[429] Rogers sees little evidence of direct conflict between whites and free people of color in Cap Français before 1792, which suggests to her that the city's free people of color were either "[m]ore hesitant or better integrated" than those in Port-au-Prince. On the other hand, she notes in passing that in July 1791, whites in le Cap lynched seventeen free men of color, an unexplained outburst of fear and violence.[430]

White revolutionary violence against free people of color also arose from a sense of competition for the right to political participation. During the Old Regime, all colonists could theoretically participate in local and provincial assemblies. The term "*habitant*," often used to designate assembly members, indicated possession of a certain level of wealth rather than membership in a particular social order. However, assemblies in Saint-Domingue required a vast fortune. The guidelines for the 1787 colonial assembly, for example, called for the election of twenty deputies, with the provision that half or more of them had to be proprietors of an estate worked by at least twenty slaves--a minimum investment of 36,000 *livres*, not including land and equipment.[431] The

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[428] Rogers, "Les libres de couleur," 375.
[429] Rogers, "Les libres de couleur," 375. Free people elsewhere in the colony received this permission without restrictions.
[430] Rogers, "Les libres de couleur," 376.
[431] Rogers, "Les libres de couleur," 370. Rogers compares these numbers to the corresponding requirements in Martinique: a minimum of 12 slaves/20,000 *livres* for inhabitants of the countryside and 40,000 *livres* worth of houses and shops for urban residents. Assuming that the same rural/urban ratio

wealthiest free people of color, like Julien Raimond and his associates, might have been able to meet this property qualification.[432] Middling and laboring whites hoped that the National Assembly would abolish such property restrictions and grant them assembly membership and voting rights on the basis of their whiteness alone. Successive decrees in December 1789, March 1790, and February 1791 all included restrictions of age, residence, and property ownership.[433] These terms theoretically extended political rights to wealthy free people of color while still denying them to middling and laboring whites, thus implicitly pitting the two groups against each other.

By the end of the contentious National Assembly debates that resulted in the Decree of May 15, 1791, speakers from across the political spectrum had shaped a definition of *petits blancs* as a group who stood dramatically outside the bounds of legitimate revolutionary citizenship. The *petits blancs* were characterized as economically marginal, socially disorderly, and politically committed to white privilege. As such, they constituted an anti-category, a foil against which Saint-Domingue's free people of color appeared eminently qualified for equal and active participation in local and national politics. This typology of the *petits blancs* also reflected the Colonial Committee's ongoing efforts to preserve the racially ordered slave society of the Old Regime. The term *petits blancs* took on new political and rhetorical functions in the context of revolutionary debates about the meanings and limits of citizenship, but also

held true, Rogers estimates that city residents in Saint-Domingue would need 72,000 *livres* of investment in urban real estate.

[432] Rogers, "Les libres de couleur,' 371-372.

[433] Rogers, "Les libres de couleur," 376.

reflected the reality of racial prejudice that permeated Dominguan society both before and during the French and Haitian Revolutions.

Petits blancs *beyond the May 1791 debates*

After the May 1791 National Assembly debates, the socio-racial category *petits blancs* surfaced periodically in histories of Old Regime Saint-Domingue and the Haitian Revolution. Most of these accounts reference the *petits blancs* in passing, as a minor detail in a broader description of the Dominguan socio-racial hierarchy or as a loosely defined group of revolutionary agitators. The secondary literature uses the term *petits blancs* uncritically, as if it pointed to a clearly defined Old Regime social group. However, a closer look at the definitions and usages of *petits blancs* in histories from the nineteenth century through the present reveals how the term acts as a catch-all, a social amalgam of traits familiar from the rhetorical category of 1791. As historians repeat and reinforce the image of the *petits blancs* as propertyless, disorderly, resentful immigrants, they flatten and distort the real socio-racial complexities of Old Regime Saint-Domingue. Most significantly, the careless deployment of the term *petits blancs* obscures the extent to which laboring and middling whites invested, economically and socially, in the devastating, dehumanizing institution of chattel slavery.

During the mid- to late 1790s, the *petits blancs* made occasional, brief appearances in Atlantic revolutionary discourse. In these instances, writers were less interested in defining or describing the *petits blancs* as a group than in identifying them as bad actors in the ongoing revolutionary turmoil in Saint-Domingue. Metropolitan

observers were unwilling to admit that people of African descent, many of them formerly enslaved, could be responsible for the successful overthrow of Saint-Domingue's slave regime and racial hierarchy. Instead, they turned to conspiracy theories featuring white counterrevolutionaries, from aristocrats to abolitionists. The *petits blancs* figured into these accounts as unruly mobs whose racist fury was manipulated and channeled by the reactionary elite. Jean-Philippe Garran-Coulon took this approach in his massive *Rapport sur les troubles de Saint-Domingue*, compiled and printed on the orders of the National Convention in 1797. He argued that the failure to seamlessly incorporate the colonies into the metropolitan revolutionary order was due to the racism of the *petits blancs*, manipulated by counter-revolutionary conspirators. Unlike rural planters, he argued, merchants and retailers in the colonial ports remained attached to France. Even "the numerous workers who made their living from the work that these [trade] relations encouraged" recognized the importance of maintaining political ties in order to maintain commerce. "They would all, without a doubt, have been disposed to welcome the principles of the French Revolution," he speculated, "if not for the deplorable prejudices that had been inculcated in them against all who were not part of the white race."[434]

Haitian historians of the early and mid-nineteenth century likewise mentioned the *petits blancs* in passing, as a sub-division of the colonial hierarchy of prejudice and oppression that the Haitian revolutionaries tore down. Jean-Louis (better known as Baron de) Vastey, Thomas Madiou, and Beaubrun Ardouin all produced histories of the

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[434] Jean-Philippe Garran-Coulon, *Rapport sur les troubles de Saint-Domingue, fait au nom de la Commission des colonies, des Comités de salut publique, de législation et de marine, réunis, par J. Ph. Garran, député par le département du Loiret. Imprimé par ordre de la Convention nationale, et distribué au Corps législatif en ventôse, an V.* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, an VII), I:158-159.

Haitian Revolution with the project of defending the independent nation of Haiti to its foreign detractors.[435] As historian Erin Zavitz argues, this was a double-edged project: they situated Haiti, and the African and Afro-descendant people who shaped it, as legitimate examples of civilization, while still using a fundamentally European definition of "civilization."[436] These three writers differed, and sometimes directly conflicted, in their interpretations of the Haitian Revolution particularly in their characterization of the relationship between the (predominantly black) former slaves and the mixed-race *gens de couleur* who emerged as revolutionary leaders. At the same time, all three understood the Haitian Revolution as part of a progressive teleology, the replacement of an Old Regime system founded on prejudice and oppression by a fundamentally better, more civilized, nation.

Within this overarching narrative, the socio-racial category *petits blancs* helps to illustrate the contentious and fundamentally unjust nature of the social hierarchy in pre-revolutionary Saint-Domingue. Vastey, for example, uses *petits blancs* as a general term to encompass all whites who were not *grands planteurs*. He is less interested in the precise divisions of white society than in how these divisions attest to the flaws of Old Regime colonial society. For Vastey, the existence of *petits blancs* only strengthened his condemnation of pre-revolutionary colonial society, in which "[a] spirit of egotism, pride, and vanity reigned in all classes; the big planters mistrusted the little

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[435] For more detailed analysis of the works of Vastey, Ardouin, and Madiou, see Doris L. Garraway, "Black Athena in Haiti: Universal History, Colonization, and the African Origins of Civilization in Postrevolutionary Haitian Writing," 287-308, in D. Tricoire, ed., *Enlightened Colonialism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Erin Zavitz, "Revolutionary Narrations: Early Haitian historiography and the challenge of writing counter-history," *Atlantic Studies* 14:3, 336-353.
[436] Zavitz, "Revolutionary Narrations," 347-348.

whites; the little whites mistrusted the men of color and free blacks; and these, in their turn, the unfortunate slaves."[437]

These three historians all depict the *petits blancs* as resentful of their social position and hostile to other socio-racial groups. However, they tend to argue that *petit blanc* hostilities during the Old Regime were directed upward, against the white planter elite, as much as downward, against the free people of color. Ardouin describes the "class vulgarly called *petits blancs*" as "envying and coveting the social position of all the proprietors, white like themselves."[438] This prerevolutionary history of white-vs-white conflict mapped onto the politics of the early Revolution in Saint-Domingue. The *petits blancs* as a category corresponded with the pro-Revolutionary "patriots", who were eager to overthrow the despotic colonial administration and, with it, the planter elite.[439] Ardouin explicitly frames the tendency of colonial whites to remain "divided in their pretentions as in their interests," as a failed first phase of revolution, one which the free people of color would build on and surpass.[440]

While Vastey, Madiou, and Ardouin all recognize the internal divisions of the white population, they ultimately point to the power of white supremacy as a unifier. Both before and during the revolution, they argue, racism was characteristic of the

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[437] "Un esprit d'égoïsme, d'orgueil et de vanité régnait dans toutes les clases; les grand-planteurs méprisaient les petits-blancs; les petits-blancs méprisaient les hommes de couleur et noirs affranchis, et ceux-ci a leur tour les malheureux esclaves." Jean-Louis Baron de Vastey, *Essai sur les causes de la Révolution et des guerres civiles d'Hayti, faisant Suite aux Réflexions Politiques sur Quelques Ouvrages et Journaux Français, Concernant Hayti* (Sans-Souci: l'Imprimerie Royale, 1819), 4. See also similar passages in Ardouin, *Études sur l'histoire d'Haïti,* 20-21, and Madiou, *Histoire d'Haiti*, 33.
[438] "...la classe vulgairement appelée *petits blancs*, enviant, jalousant la position sociale de tous les propriétaires, blancs comme eux." Ardouin, *Études sur l'histoire d'Haiti*, 21.
[439] Vastey, *Essai sur les causes de la Révolution*, 6-7; Ardouin, *Études sur l'histoire d'Haïti*, 109-110.
[440] "...divisée dans ses prétentions comme dans ses intérêts," Ardouin, *Études sur l'histoire d'Haïti*, 109-110.

blancs as a whole, not particularly endemic to the *petits blancs*. Madiou observes that despite earlier revolutionary conflict between colonial whites, they united in fierce rejection of the Decree of May 15, 1791.[441] Vastey makes a similar argument, positioning Toussaint L'Ouverture as the threat that ultimately brought colonial whites together.[442] Ardouin alone points to something particularly virulent about *petit blanc* racism when he writes, "[t]he class of little whites made a show of themselves everywhere through their ruthlessness, marked by all the brutality of these mostly-illiterate men."[443] This is the most direct use, in these three histories, of the *petits blancs* as a foil for another socio-racial group, in this case the wealthy, well-educated mixed-race elite of independent Haiti.

Like their nineteenth-century counterparts, historians writing in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries understand the Haitian revolution as an Atlantic or global event. However, this is no longer a narrative of progressive civilization, in which the Haitian Revolution represents an outgrowth or extension of French revolutionary politics. Instead, a growing body of scholarship recognizes the Haitian Revolution as a product of local, as well as Atlantic, actors and ideas. As historians interrogate the local causes of the Haitian Revolution, they have taken a closer look at the "tripartite" colonial racial hierarchy of the Old Regime. Scholars increasingly understand racial "lines" as unstable, constantly created, transgressed, and defended. Simultaneously, they have shifted away from a racially tripartite understanding of revolutionary political loyalties.

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[441] Madiou, *Histoire d'Haiti*, 68.
[442] Vastey, *Essai sur les causes de la Révolution*, 19.
[443] Ardouin, *Études sur l'histoire d'Haïti*, 126.

Over the past few decades, historians have reexamined the relationship between socio-racial identities and revolutionary engagements in greater detail, sometimes at the level of the choices and contingencies of an individual life.[444] Nevertheless, middling and laboring whites tend to remain obscured within the broad category of *petits blancs*, outlined broadly in terms familiar from the rhetoric of the 1791 debates.

For the most part, the recent histories that refer to *petits blancs* do so without, seemingly, a great deal of consideration. Michel-Rolph Trouillot, in his essay "Motion in the System," gives a footnote explanation that the term *petits blancs* has been used "[s]ince colonial times."[445] John Garrigus and Trevor Burnard, in *The Plantation Machine*, also attribute *petits blancs* to general usage.[446] In other cases, citations lead to glancing references in other secondary sources. Garrigus, in *Before Haiti*, cites the works of Pierre Pluchon and David Geggus; Rogers also cites Pluchon; Laurent Dubois and David Geggus both cite Gabriel Debien.[447] Carolyn Fick paraphrases C.L.R.

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[444] For example: Garrigus, *Before Haiti*; Rogers, "Les libres de couleur"; Rebecca J. Scott and Jean M. Hébrard, *Freedom Papers: An Atlantic Odyssey in the Age of Emancipation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012); Laurent Dubois, "An Enslaved Enlightenment: Rethinking the Intellectual History of the French Atlantic," *Social History* 31, no. 1 (February 2006): 1-14; Carolyn Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint-Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990); Terry Rey, *The Priest and the Prophetess: Abbé Ouvière, Romaine Rivière, and the Revolutionary Atlantic World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[445] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "Motion in the System: Coffee, Color, and Slavery in Eighteenth-Century Saint-Domingue," *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Winter 1982): 331-388, 352 n53.

[446] Trevor Burnard and John Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine: Atlantic Capitalism in French Saint-Domingue and British Jamaica* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 97. Also: Popkin, *You Are All Free*, 62; Alex Dupuy, *Rethinking the Haitian Revolution: Slavery, Independence, and the Struggle for Recognition* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), 73.

[447] Garrigus, *Before Haiti*, 336, notes 28 and 29; Rogers, "Les libres de couleur," 62, note 161; Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 315, note 58; Geggus, *Slavery, War, and Revolution*, 406, note 27.

James's classic *The Black Jacobins*.[448] Finally, scholars occasionally cite the equally cursory references to *petits blancs* by eighteenth-century colonial observers.[449]

Historians distinguish *petits blancs* from other colonial whites primarily on the basis of a lack of property--specifically, property in land. Charles Frostin first introduces the group as "that of the 'little Whites,' by which we should understand, the whites without land."[450] Frostin, Geggus, Trouillot, and Garrigus all connect the rise of the *petits blancs* to the expansion of coffee agriculture, closing of the colonial "frontier" of undeveloped land, and subsequent dispossession of small rural planters that took place in the 1750s and 1760s.[451] Dominique Rogers, noting that "being a *habitant* had powerful symbolic value, lumps one-third of the Dominguan white population into the category "petits Blancs," on the grounds that "[T]hey had no landed property nor, often, slaves."[452] Laurent Dubois also highlights the symbolic as well as practical distinction of landed property when he claims that slaves "coined the term *petit blancs*--little whites--to refer to those who did not own the land, contrasting them to the *grand blancs* (big whites), also called *Blanc blancs*, or 'White whites,' whose ownership of property made them true whites."[453]

In the recent historiography, the socio-racial category *petits blancs* also has connotations of immigration, vagabondage, and disorder reminiscent of the 1791

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[448] Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, 17.
[449] Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, 278, note 11; Geggus, *Slavery, War, and Revolution*, 406, note 27.
[450] Frostin, *Les révoltes blanches*, 57.
[451] Frostin, *Les révoltes blanches*, 57; Geggus, *Slavery, War, and Revolution*, 9; Garrigus, *Before Haiti*, 118; Trouillot, "Motion in the System.
[452] "[Ê]tre habitant a une valeur symbolique forte... Ils n'ont pas de propriété terrienne, ni d'esclaves souvent." Rogers, *Les libres de couleur*, 62.
[453] Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 35; Frostin, *Les révoltes blanches*, 71. Also Carolyn Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, 17, for basic distinction between *grands* and *petits blancs*.

National Assembly debates. C.L.R. James's vivid description of *petit blanc* immigrants is worth quoting in its entirety:

> Included among the small whites was a crowd of city vagabonds, fugitives from justice, escaped galley slaves, debtors unable to pay their bills, adventurers seeking adventure or quick fortunes, men of all crimes and all nationalities. From the underworld of two continents they came, Frenchmen and Spaniards, Maltese, Italians, Portuguese and Americans. For whatever a man's origin, record or character, here his white skin made him a person of quality and rejected or failures in their own country flocked to San Domingo, where consideration was achieved at so cheap a price, money flowed and opportunities of debauchery abounded.[454]

Charles Frostin similarly defines a common colonial troublemaker, the *vagabond de Saint-Domingue*, as "a 'petit Blanc' who was rejected by colonial society, or who excluded himself from it, for diverse reasons: the impossibility of 'establishing himself,' the impossibility of finding employment, or even 'idleness,' instability, a taste for adventure, and sometimes habits of delinquence brought from France or acquired in the colony."[455] This view of *petits blancs* as unruly and mobile intersects, but doesn't neatly overlap, with the concept of *petits blancs* as unpropertied. Geggus observes that "[t]he *petits blancs* formed a broad social group that embraced both the industrious *apprenti-colon* and the dregs of waterfront life."[456] Likewise, Garrigus identifies two kinds of *petits blancs*, one "an ambitious young man hoping to make his fortune as a planter," the other "the same kind of refugee from state authority that had populated the colony in the seventeenth century," but both recent immigrants.[457]

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[454] James, *The Black Jacobins*, 33.
[455] "Le vagabond de Saint-Domingue, définissons-le comme un 'petit Blanc' qui a été rejeté de la société coloniale, ou s'en est exclu, pour divers motifs: impossibilité de 's'établir', impossibilité de trouver un emploi, ou encore 'fainéantise', instabilité, goût de l'aventure, et parfois des habitudes de délinquance apportées de métropole ou acquises sur place." Frostin, *Les révoltes blanches*, 60. Also, Burnard and Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine*, 97, for *petits blancs* as immigrants.
[456] Geggus, *Slavery, War, and Revolution*, 9.
[457] Garrigus, *Before Haiti*, 118.

Finally, historians highlight the marked racism of the *petits blancs* in terms that are again reminiscent of the 1791 National Assembly debates. This attribute depends on the previous two, as *petit-blanc* hostility to the free people of color is commonly explained by the disparity between immigrant *petits blancs*' hoped-for fortune and social elevation and their actual (presumed) destitution. Charles Frostin sees seventeenth-century origins for this dynamic, pointing to the persistent presence in Saint-Domingue of "the little Whites, an ensemble of bitter and violent individuals forming a sort of 'dangerous class' who were not tied to the colonial interest by anything, unless it was the racial passion born of contact with a slave society."[458]

Other historians connect the problem of *petit-blanc* racism in Saint-Domingue to the post-1760 combination of rising rates of immigration and declining economic opportunities. Carolyn Fick suggests that amid diminished opportunities for investment in land and growing competition for jobs from free people of color, the derision of the enslaved population for the *petits blancs* "exacerbat[ed] the psychological effects of economic insecurity in a society where, without property ownership, entry into the upper echelons was all but impossible."[459] As a result, she claims, "the *petits blancs* were the most vulnerable and consequently the most volatile element in the white colonial regime." Dominique Rogers argues that "the spite of the little Whites, bitter and deceived by the failure of their dreams of rapid wealth," was the exception rather than the norm in a society characterized overall by the progressive economic success and

[458] "...des petits Blancs, ensemble d'individus aigris et violents formant une sorte de 'classe dangereuse' que rien ne retenait à l'intérêt colon, sinon les passions raciales nées au contact d'une société esclavagiste."Frostin, *Les révoltes blanches*, 127.
[459] Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, 18.

social integration of the free people of color.[460] Conversely, both Michel-Rolph Trouillot and John Garrigus see the marginal, racist *petits blancs* as a driving force behind the more rigid and systematic enforcement of racial categories in Saint-Domingue in the decades before the French and Haitian Revolutions.[461]

These generalizing descriptions of the *petits blancs* as a socio-racial category correspond with lived experience, in a sense. Both before and during the revolutionary period, laboring and middling whites in Saint-Domingue employed diverse strategies, including violence, to claim and defend the prerogatives of "whiteness". However, by gesturing to a racist mob of *petits blancs* lurking at the social and economic margins of Dominguan society, historians inadvertently distort our image of laboring and middling whites and limit our understanding of what lay behind their racist behavior.

Specifically, histories that make uncritical use of the category *petits blancs* obscure how the vicious economic and social logic of slavery operated at multiple scales across Dominguan society. If the white artisans and retailers who found a foothold in Cap Français were not plantation owners, neither were they entirely propertyless: many eagerly bought, sold, and rented human "property." They deployed the economic and social capital they extracted as enslavers as part of a repertoire of strategies for advancement. The French and Haitian Revolutions did not simply enflame the racist resentment of marginal whites against the more successful free people of color. Instead, middling and laboring whites agitated against the revolutionary promises

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[460] "...le dépit des petits Blancs aigris et déçus par l'échec de leurs rêves d'enrichissement rapide," Rogers, *Les libres de couleur*, 582.
[461] Trouillot, "Motion in the System," 360; Garrigus, *Before Haiti*, 7-8.

of racial equality and the end of slavery because they had a personal stake in the maintenance of these intertwined systems of oppression.

The socio-racial category *petits blancs* did not originate in the National Assembly debates of May 11-15, 1791, but these debates brought the term *petits blancs* into the revolutionary Atlantic lexicon and inscribed some of its clearest definitions in the historical record. The figure of the *petit blanc*--propertyless, dangerously mobile, literally and rhetorically opposed to Saint-Domingue's free people of color--emerges decades and centuries later in the historical literature about Old Regime Saint-Domingue and the Haitian Revolution. Historians have brought the complexities of racial identity and revolutionary allegiance among the colony's enslaved and free colored population into new and brilliant focus. However, the catch-all category of *petits blancs* remains, blurring the social experiences and political commitments of colonial whites outside of the planter, merchant, and administrative elite.

Setting aside *petits blancs* as an analytical category does not make the laboring and middling white population look notably more respectable or less racist. Instead, it emphasizes how deeply slavery penetrated every aspect and level of Dominguan society. Further, it highlights the culpability of laboring and middling whites as enslavers who benefited socially and economically from Saint-Domingue's brutal hierarchy of prejudice and privilege. Finally, this revised view of pre-revolutionary white society reframes urban white behavior during the Haitian revolution, from vaguely defined mob

action to willing participation in the sometimes-violent defense of their social and economic gains.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation goes beyond the superficial socio-racial category of *petits blancs* to tell a more complicated story about migration, whiteness, and the social and economic exchanges that structured everyday life in Old Regime Saint-Domingue. Historians tend to lump post-1763 migrants from France to Saint-Domingue in with the so-called *petits blancs*, who are understood as propertyless, resentful whites who gathered in growing numbers at the margins of colonial society. Here, I set aside the predetermined stereotypes of the *petits blancs* as I trace some of these migrants through the urban commercial world of Cap Français.

To begin, I argue against the common conception that migration from France to the Caribbean was a disorganized, desperate move undertaken by criminals, vagabonds, and anyone else fleeing the rigid order of metropolitan society. Instead, migration to the Caribbean drew on some of the practices of identification that structured internal migration and enabled mobile individuals to retain stable identities and reputations. When migrants departed France for the Caribbean, they brought these identity markers and reputational practices with them.

As newly arrived migrants from France maneuvered for social and economic advancement in pre-revolutionary Cap Français, they deployed familiar reputation-building tactics from metropolitan France even as they adopted new colonial conventions for asserting status. The urban commercial world of Cap Français both facilitated and rewarded this process of improvisation. The constant flow of people,

goods, and information through the port encouraged the swift formation of social connections and the quick establishment of credit. Further, like other Caribbean cities, le Cap was designed to defend the white colonial population. Urban order and discipline reinforced the rule of white supremacy even as confrontations on city streets revealed a racial order that was still being created and contested.

As migrants sought a foothold in the urban marketplace, they relied on credit to guard against the risks and fluctuations inherent in colonial commerce. To establish themselves in credit relationships, white retailers and artisans in Cap Français, like those in metropolitan France, played on affective ties, made notarized contracts, and turned to multiple legal jurisdictions. However, in Cap Français, these practices took on a colonial twist. The system of slavery underpinned all of these credit transactions, as enslaved people served as human repositories of wealth.

Finally, laboring and middling whites benefited from the unusual place of Cap Français at the intersection of two labor regimes. As both a voracious market for enslaved Africans and a "privileged site" for free labor without guild restrictions, the city gave retailers and artisans an unusual degree of flexibility to claim mastery over both enslaved and free workers. These "masters" extracted both social and economic capital from the laborers under their authority. This dissertation demonstrates that middling and laboring migrants played upon family and regional connections, credit networks, and multiple meanings of mastery to assert their privileged status as white. Further, all of these strategies and claims were underpinned by migrants' eager investment in the oppressive regime of slavery.

The laboring and middling whites of Cap Français welcomed the French Revolution as an opportunity to challenge the power of the colonial administration. The revolution also opened new political possibilities of participation as active citizens in local assemblies. On the other hand, the revolutionary rhetoric of liberty and equality threatened the slave system on which white retailers and artisans' social and economic capital depended. When laboring and middling whites resisted revolutionary changes, they did so to defend the status they had achieved.

The French Revolution also sparked a heated and long-running Atlantic debate about the meanings and limits of citizenship. From an Old Regime collection of social and economic rights grounded in an urban, citizenship became a political right, that of representing the "national will" to shape the nation's government and laws. As different social groups laid claim to this new political citizenship, they justified their inclusion through competing projects of social categorization. In May 1791, the National Assembly debated the citizenship claim of Saint-Domingue's free people of color, with particular reference to a social-racial category known as the *petits blancs*. Over several days of debate, the *petits blancs* emerged as an anti-category to the free people of color. In this rhetorical construction, the free people of color were productive property owners, stable families, and loyal subjects attached both to the colony and the nation, while the *petits blancs* were propertyless, migrants and vagabonds, willing to collaborate with any enemy power who appealed to their greed. The rhetorical *petits blancs* resembled their laboring and middling counterparts in Saint-Domingue only in the sense that both engaged in violent displays of prejudice against free people of color.

However, when historians of Old Regime Saint-Domingue and the Haitian Revolution describe the colony's white population, they often do so in terms of a divide between *petits blancs* and *grands blancs* or *grands planteurs*. The *petits blancs* in these histories are always propertyless and often immigrants. They ebb and flow restlessly along the margins of colonial society, where they nurture racist resentment against the better-off free people of color with whom they compete for wealth and status. This amounts to a careless repetition of revolutionary stereotypes rather than an attentive description of the complex socio-racial divisions of colonial society.

The most important consequence of the catch-all, generalizing usage of *petits blancs* is that it obscures laboring and middling whites' willing investment in slavery. As this dissertation has shown, investment in slavery was a key component of laboring and middling whites' pre-revolutionary strategies for social and economic advancement, and an explanatory factor for their violent revolutionary loyalties. Far from vindicating laboring and middling whites as somehow less racist than the stereotypical *petit blanc*, this interpretation highlights their culpability as enslavers as well as defenders of racial privilege.

This story of migration, whiteness, and social and economic improvisation does not end with the French Revolution. By 1804, when Haiti became the world's first independent Black Republic, there were few laboring or middling whites left in Cap Français--then known as Cap Haïtien. During the decade and more of revolutionary conflict, from 1791 to 1804, over 30,000 individuals fled Saint-Domingue.[462] These out-

[462] R. Darrell Meadows, "The Planters of Saint-Domingue, 1750-1804: Migration and Exile in the French Revolutionary Atlantic," Ph.D. Diss., Carnegie Mellon University, 2004, 1. Recent studies of revolutionary

migrants dispersed across the Revolutionary Atlantic in successive waves. From 1791 to 1793, a slow trickle of migrants made planned moves to neighboring plantation societies in the circum-Caribbean. After the destruction of Cap Français in June 1793, an emergency convoy carried some 3,000 to 5,000 individuals away from the colony. Most of these refugees were scattered along the east coast of the United States, in port cities including Savannah, Charleston, Norfolk, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York.[463] Over the next few months, hundreds more migrants who had been unable to reach the harbor in le Cap, or who lived elsewhere in the colony, also departed Saint-Domingue for North America. From there, many began a process of step-migration, trying their luck in a sequence of locations in North America, the circum-Caribbean, or even France.[464] Three more waves of Dominguan out-migration followed: one after the departure of British forces in 1798; another following the 1804 Haitian declaration of independence. A final mass movement took place in 1809, when thousands of revolutionary refugees, forced to leave Cuba, flooded into Louisiana.[465]

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migrants include: Susan Branson and Leslie Patrick, "Étrangers dans un Pays Étrange: Saint Dominguan Refugees of Color in Philadelphia," in *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, ed. David P. Geggus (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001); Nathalie Dessens, *From Saint-Domingue to New Orleans: Migration and Influences* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007); R. Darrell Meadows, "Engineering Exile: Social Networks and the French Atlantic Community, 1789-1809," *French Historical Studies* 23, no. 1 (Winter 2000): 67-102. Pierre Force, "The House on Bayou Road: Atlantic Creole Networks in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Journal of American History* Vol. 100, no. 1 (June 2013): 21-45.

[463] Jeremy D. Popkin, *You Are All Free: The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery* (Cambridge, U.K. and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 291-295.

[464] Meadows, "The Planters of Saint-Domingue," gives an estimate of 10,000 refugees either in or passing through France during the 1790s, although these were most likely the more affluent planters and merchants.

[465] Ashli White, *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 5.

Wherever they landed refugees from the revolution in Saint-Domingue had a marked impact on their host societies. In the United States, the 1793 refugees strained the financial resources of local aid societies and French consuls along the east coast and contributed to an epidemic of yellow fever in Philadelphia.[466] The refugees who arrived in New Orleans in 1809 nearly doubled the city's population.[467] Politically, the presence of Dominguan refugees offered white Americans an object warning about the dangers of slave revolt. Residents of the Early Republic, fearful that the Haitian Revolution would repeat itself in the United States, compared themselves to the revolutionary exiles as they debated questions about slaveholding and about republican national identity.[468] Refugees from Saint-Domingue sought whatever kind of employment they could find, sometimes continuing in a previous occupation or trade. As clerks, hatmakers, French teachers, musicians, storekeepers, goldsmiths, seamstresses, and so on, they emphasized their French background to appeal to potential customers and employers.[469] Communities of refugees formed distinctive cultural and political enclaves within the North American port cities where they settled.[470]

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[466] Popkin, *You Are All Free*, Chapter 9, "Saint-Domingue in the United States."
[467] Rebecca J. Scott and Jean M. Hébrard, *Freedom Papers: An Atlantic Odyssey in the Age of Emancipation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012), 69.
[468] White, *Encountering Revolution*, 2-3. Also, James Alexander Dun, *Dangerous Neighbors: Making the Haitian Revolution in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).
[469] White, *Encountering Revolution*, 32.
[470] White, "The 'New Cape,' in *Encountering Revolution*; François Furstenberg, *When the United States Spoke French: Five Refugees Who Shaped a Nation* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2014); Emily Clark, *The Strange History of the American Quadroon: Free Women of Color in the Revolutionary Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013); Jessica Marie Johnson, *Wicked Flesh: Black Women, Intimacy, and Freedom in the Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020).

Further, white refugees from revolutionary Saint-Domingue engaged in a process of collaboration with their host societies to define their own socio-racial status and to impose statuses on free and formerly enslaved refugees of color. When Dominguan refugees arrived en masse in Cuba in 1798, many whites claimed the people of color who traveled alongside them as their slaves. Although slavery had been formally abolished in Saint-Domingue for four years at that point, Cuban authorities willingly accepted these false claims.[471] When French refugees were ordered to leave the island a decade later, those who traveled to Louisiana faced a potential challenge to their rights of property in persons. In 1808, the United States Congress declared the foreign slave trade illegal and threatened any captain who landed foreign slaves with confiscation of his ship.[472] White refugee enslavers brought their human "property" with them with the expectation that some exception to the law would be made. They were vindicated in June 1809, when Congress authorized the President to suspend the usual penalties for captains who brought slaves into the United States accompanied by Dominguan refugees.[473]

The Louisiana Territory, where racism was becoming increasingly entrenched and slavery was expanding, proved hospitable to white refugees who wanted to reimpose the relations of slavery as they had existed in pre-revolutionary Saint-Domingue. Take, for example, the legal battle between Adélaïde Métayer, a free woman

[471] Scott and Hébrard, *Freedom Papers*, 52.
[472] Scott and Hébrard, *Freedom Papers*, 59.
[473] Scott and Hébrard, *Freedom Papers*, 67.

of color, and Louis Noret, a white tailor, both former residents of Cap Français.[474] In Saint-Domingue, Noret had been the business partner of Adélaïde's enslaver, Charles Métayer. Charles Métayer and his wife fled to New York in 1793 and took Adélaïde, then around 11 years old, with them. When the Métayers returned to Saint-Domingue in the mid-1790s, after the abolition of slavery, Adélaïde remained in their household. Despite her formal freedom, her status remained ambiguous until January 7, 1801, when Charles signed a private receipt acknowledging her purchase of her freedom. According to rumor, Charles and his wife died in Cap Français, killed after the withdrawal of French troops in 1803. By that time Adélaïde had left the colony again, passing from Jamaica to Cuba to New Orleans where she crossed paths with Noret. Noret somehow convinced Adélaïde to give him her unofficial proof of freedom for safekeeping. In March 1810, he went to the City Court to claim that he was owed a debt by Louis Métayer, Charles's brother and presumed heir.[475] In Louis's absence, Noret obtained a court order permitting him to seize any of Louis's property located in New Orleans. The sheriff immediately seized Adélaïde and her three children and prepared to offer them for public sale. Before the sale date arrived, Adélaïde managed to find an attorney to contest the seizure. Tellingly, she based the case on her freedom paper from 1801, not on the general emancipation of 1794. This strategy worked to free her

[474] Rebecca J. Scott, "'She...Refuses to Deliver Up Herself as the Slave of your Petitioner': Émigrés, Enslavement, and the 1808 Louisiana Digest of the Civil Laws," *Tulane European & Civil Law Forum* Vol. 24, for a detailed account and analysis of this case.
[475] More precisely, he filed his claim on March 16, 1810--the same day the Legislative Council and Governor of the Territory of Orleans recognized émigrés' full ownership rights of their enslaved "property" (Scott, "She... Refuses," 127.

and her two daughters, but not her son, who had been born before her self-purchase in 1801 and was not included in the document.

Finally, middling and laboring white male refugees benefited from the definitions of republican citizenship and social equality that were solidifying in both France and the United States. Over the course of the 1790s, both republican regimes increasingly denied citizenship to groups such as women and people of color while simultaneously expanding the reach of white male citizenship by lowering property and age requirements. Jean Simon Chauvron, a "watch-maker by trade," took advantage of this new political access. By 1798, Chauvron and his family had found their way from Cap Français to Philadelphia. When he applied for naturalization, he entered the public record of potential U.S. citizens with the uncontested status of "a white and free Man."[476]

As the Haitian revolutionaries' radical overthrow of colonial slave society reverberated through the Revolutionary Atlantic, the surrounding societies of the circum-Caribbean responded by redoubling their own commitments to racism and slavery. In the revolutionary diaspora of the early nineteenth century, as in Old Regime Saint-Domingue, anyone who could claim property in persons could extract economic and social capital from the labor and the bodies of the enslaved. In consequence, when white refugees from revolutionary Saint-Domingue found themselves alone in unfamiliar

[476] National Archives Record Group 21 (Records of District Courts of the United States, 1685-1991): Landing Reports of Aliens, 1798-1828. US District Court for Eastern Pennsylvania, Vol. 1, Report No. 25, Jean Simon Chauvron [Chaudron], December 13, 1798.

ports, they could call upon a familiar repertoire of social and economic strategies to begin rebuilding their lives.

APPENDIX A

PASSENGERS DEPARTING BORDEAUX, 1763-1787

TABLE I: ALL PASSENGERS BY DESTINATION

YEARS	SAINT-DOMINGUE	FRENCH COLONIES	OTHER	TOTAL
1760-1764	118	62	11	191
1765-1769	113	77	13	203
1770-1764	170	70	12	252
1775-1769	269	122	31	422
1780-1787*	223	84	36	243
TOTAL	893	415	103	1411

*Passenger records for 1785 and 1789 are not available.

TABLE II: SAINT-DOMINGUE PASSENGERS BY ORIGIN

YEARS	EUROPE	FRENCH COLONIES	AQUITAINE	SURROUNDING REGIONS**	OTHER FRANCE	AFRICA	UNLISTED	TOTAL
1760-1764	3	26	25	15	19	4	26	118
1765-1769	2	19	40	20	19	3	10	113
1770-1774	4	22	48	44	40	5	7	170
1775-1779	2	50	78	65	47	6	21	269
1780-1787	6	42	81	37	50	1	6	223
TOTAL	17	159	272	181	175	19	70	893

**Including the provinces of Angoumois, Auvergne, Béarn, Comté de Foix, Languedoc, Limousin, Périgord, and Saintonge.

TABLE III: SAINT-DOMINGUE PASSENGERS FROM FRANCE BY PROVINCE OF ORIGIN

Alsace	3
Angoumois	7
Anjou	6
Aunis	10
Auvergne	10
Béarn	18
Berry	8
Bourgogne	6
Bretagne	12
Champagne	17
Comtat Venaissin	1
Comté de Foix	2
Corsica	2
Dauphiné	11
Flandre	2
Franche-Comté	5
Gascogne	74
Guyenne	198
Hainaut	2
Île-de-France	17
Languedoc	39
Limousin	24
Lorraine	5
Lyonnais	12
Marche	2
Navarre	1
Nivernais	1
Normandie	10
Orléanais	5
Périgord	13
Picardie	4
Poitiers	6
Provence	9
Saintonge	68
Savoye	1
Touraine	2
Unspecified	15
TOTAL	628

TABLE IV: SAINT-DOMINGUE PASSENGERS BY AGE

0-10	20
11-15	40
16-20	179
21-25	211
26-30	174
31-35	80
36-40	66
41-45	27
46-50	18
51+	29
Unspecified	45
TOTAL	893

TABLE V: SAINT-DOMINGUE PASSENGERS BY RACE AND GENDER

White*** Men	674
Free Men of Color	14
Enslaved Men	58
White Women	99
Free Women of Color	11
Enslaved Women	37
All Men	746
All Women	147
TOTAL	893

*** "White" here indicates a lack of specific racial designation.

TABLE VI: SAINT-DOMINGUE PASSENGERS BY DESTINATION

Cap Français	365
Les Cayes	24
Fort Dauphin	1
Jacmel	6
Léogane	8
Port-de-Paix	1
Port-au-Prince	85
Saint-Louis	50
Saint-Marc	32
Unspecified	353
TOTAL	893

TABLE VII: SAINT-DOMINGUE PASSENGERS BY DESTINATION AND STATUS/AFFILIATION

	CAP FRANÇAIS	PORT-AU-PRINCE	TOTAL
ELITE (i.e., colonial administration, merchants, *habitants*)	57	15	144
MIDDLING (bourgeois, retailers, artisans, clerks)	54	21	136
MANUAL LABOR	15	1	28
FAMILY RELATIONSHIP	22	13	69
FREE COLORED	12	3	25
ENSLAVED	43	6	95
NONE INDICATED	162	26	396
TOTAL	365	85	893

APPENDIX B

NOTARIAL RECORDS FROM CAP FRANÇAIS, 1777-1789

TABLE I: CROSS-RACIAL CONTRACTS BY TYPE

	CROSS-RACIAL	TOTAL	% CROSS-RACIAL
Apprenticeship	5	12	42
Business Partnership	4	68	6
Debt/Repayment	20	83	24
Enfranchisement*	---	18	---
Gift	3	11	27
Marriage Contract	1	53	2
Power of Attorney	1	85	1
Act of Notoriety**	0	17	0
Rental Agreement	13	114	11
Sale	9	193	19
Will	9	68	13
TOTAL	93	722	13

*Enslaved individuals were frequently active participants in securing their own freedom, but the notarial acts registering these freedoms are framed in terms of an individual actor, not a shared undertaking between multiple participants.
**Translation of *acte de notoriété*, in other cases rendered as *attestation*. In this type of act, one individual made a public statement about their knowledge of another's background or reputation.

TABLE II: CROSS-RACIAL CONTRACTS BY GENDER OF PARTICIPANTS

	Men of color	Women of color	Men and women of color*	TOTAL
White men	42	35	11	88
White women	4	1	0	5
TOTAL	46	36	11	93

*These contracts often involved a white man engaging in a transaction with a free woman of color and a mixed-race boy, possibly their child.

TABLE III: CONTRACTS INVOLVING WHITE WOMEN BY TYPE

	WHITE WOMEN	TOTAL	% WHITE WOMEN
Apprenticeship	2	12	17
Business Partnership	5	68	7
Debt/Repayment	15	83	18
Enfranchisement	1	18	6
Gift	4	11	36
Marriage Contract	45	53	85
Power of Attorney	20	85	24
Act of Notoriety	2	17	12
Rental Agreement	21	114	18
Sale	36	193	19
Will	12	68	18
TOTAL	163	722	23

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EDUCATION

PhD in History **Expected Spring 2021**
Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD
Dissertation title: "Whiteness on Credit: Migration, Race, and Social Capital in France and the Caribbean, 1763-1791"
Advisors: Michael Kwass, Philip Morgan

MA in History
2014
Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD
Winner of the Alexander Butler Prize for best first-year paper: "'To pursue peaceably and with honesty my line of business': Commercial Reputations and Political Claims among Émigrés in Philadelphia, 1798"

BA in History, *Magna cum laude* **2008**
Pomona College, Claremont, CA

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Graduate Intern
The Johns Hopkins University Press **Fall 2019-present**
Acquisitions Department
- Coordinate communications between authors, editors, and reviewers of books in production; organize information across multiple ongoing projects; edit book jacket copy; compose dockets and handouts for internal meetings; compile source documentation for online publication.

Instructor **Fall 2019**
Department of History, Johns Hopkins University
"The Haitian Revolution in Global Perspective"
- Designed syllabus for one-semester course; engaged students in critical thinking and source interpretation; facilitated classroom discussion; guided students through drafting and editing written assignments; evaluated written work; mentored students in office hours and informal interactions.

Teaching Assistant **2013-2016**
Department of History, Johns Hopkins University
- Supported course instructor in organization of course materials, communication with students, collection and distribution of written work; facilitated weekly discussion groups; assessed student performance in class and on written assignments; edited and offered feedback on written work.

Doctoral Researcher **2014-present**
Department of History, Johns Hopkins University
- Conduct on-site primary research in archives in France, England, and the United States; apply for grants and fellowships to enable research; organize and

maintain digital archive of source material and research notes; utilize technologies for mapping and database construction; communicate research findings to colleagues at academic conferences.

Editor/Translator **2016-present**

- Employ language skills to translate article-length academic writing from French into English; collaborate with academic faculty on a contract basis to provide copy-editing services for academic writing, ranging from article- to book-length projects.

HONORS AND AWARDS

Dean's Prize Fellowship, Johns Hopkins University Fall 2019
Alexander Grass Humanities Institute Fellowship Spring 2019
Masséna Society Dissertation Research Fellowship Summer 2017
Singleton Center for the Study of Premodern Europe Graduate Research Fellowship, Johns Hopkins University Spring 2016
Chateaubriand Fellowship in the Humanities and Social Sciences Fall 2014-Spring 2015
George Owen Fellowship, Johns Hopkins University 2012-2015
Hodson Fellowship in the Humanities, Johns Hopkins University 2012-2013
Alexander Butler Prize for best first-year paper, Johns Hopkins University 2013
Hager Prize in Religious Studies, Pomona College 2008
Ada F. Hartog Memorial Prize in European History, Pomona College 2008
Phi Beta Kappa, Pomona College 2008

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

“Petits Blancs”: The Revolutionary Origins of a Socio-Racial Category"
French Atlantic History Group Seminar, McGill University/Université de Montréal
Montréal, Québec September 2018

"Bondage and Contract: Free and Slave Apprenticeships in Old Regime Saint-Domingue,"
"Voices from the Legal Archives"/Voix (Voies) des archives judiciaires"
Montréal, Québec May 2018

"The Régiment du Cap and the Contest for Revolutionary Authority in Cap Français, 1789-1792"
The Consortium on the Revolutionary Era, 1750-1850,
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania February 2018

"An Extended Web: Migrants to Saint-Domingue in the Late Eighteenth Century"
The Western Society for French History,
Cedar Rapids, Iowa October 2016

PUBLICATIONS

"Trust, Obligation, and the Racialized Credit Market in Pre-Revolutionary Cap Français," in *Voices in the Legal Archives in the French Colonial World: "The King is Listening"* (Routledge: 2020)